

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION / Rich Stallcup and Russell Greenberg

Rather usual summer weather, with the exception of unseasonably heavy rains on July eighth and ninth produced normal, expected reports, with few if any abnormal highs or lows, unusual abundances or rarities.



In the Central Valleys (below C.V.) the rains plus extra water from increased rice plantings and that left over from the wet winter provided waterfowl habitat not normally present and thus higher than usual productivity (California Fish and Game, below C.F.G.). At Eagle Lake a late spring and cooler-than-usual weather delayed maturation of emergent vegetation, greatly affecting nesting of grebes, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and other rush-nesting species. Only one quarter the normal number of Western Grebes was nesting on the lake, however this decline may also be owing to increasing

human usage there (PM). A dagger following a report means that a written description is on file with the Regional Editors.

LOONS THROUGH PETRELS—As is usual, a few of each of Common, Red-throated and Arctic Loons oversummered at coastal lagoons and harbors, Commons being most frequently encountered and Red-throated being least. Arctic Loons were still migrating north into mid-June also as is normal and one in breeding plumage at Carmel Bay June 27 (P.R.B.O.) was late. Two breeding-plumaged Com. Loons were at Twin Lakes, Mono Co., June 21 (P.R.B.O.). Commons may still breed sparsely at several such east side lakes. Fewer-than-usual W. Grebes nested at Eagle L. (see above) but good success was noted at Bridgeport L. June 21 (P.R.B.O.).

Black-footed Albatrosses were present throughout the period in Monterey Bay with a maximum of eight July 24 (BGE) and off Eureka where a maximum of 500+ was found at a working drag boat 20 mi. out July 16 (GF, RLeV). A single Laysan Albatross† was reported off Trinidad June 25 (GR, RLeV). Pink-footed and Sooty Shearwaters were more widely reported than usual (many obs.) especially in Monterey Bay, owing to forage fish dieoffs near local harbors (BGE). The only storm-petrels seen away from offshore breeding rocks were two Ashys July 24 off Monterey (BGE), two Leach's with one Fork-tailed June 25 off Trinidad, one Leach's July 13, and two Fork-tailed July 16 off Eureka (GR, RLeV).

PELICANS THROUGH HERONS—Contrary to what local bird lists say, White Pelicans return to the S.F. Bay Area in late June and 95 were at Palo Alto July 13 (JM). Brown Pelicans returned in the first week of June (many obs.) and numbers thereafter rapidly increased, which is normal. Adults were most prevalent on rocky headlands and islands and immatures at calm bays and lagoons. This has been the noticeable trend for at least the last four falls. Double-crested Cormorants nested at Eagle L. with 12 pairs (PM) and at Bridgeport L. with at least six pairs (P.R.B.O.). The exact breeding status of this species in our region is unknown. Green Herons had good nesting success on rivers in the C.V. (BK). A Great Egret at L. Almanor July 26 (PM) was away from its usual lowland range and the two Cattle Egrets found last spring at Novato were still present until at least June second (LCB). There is still no nesting record for the region. A Least Bittern was photographed at Gray Lodge July 6 (SL) and possibly the same individual was seen there July 9 & 16 (BD).

WATERFOWL—Habitat conditions in n.e. California were good and much improved over the dry conditions of last year. The winter and spring rain and snow runoff filled most of the permanent impoundments and marshes and created some temporary habitat with enough water to produce and raise birds. Canada Geese and duck nesting was on schedule in this area.

Precipitation was above average in the Central Valley for the second consecutive year. Since this area is mostly composed of artificial and regulated water impoundments such as rice fields, grasslands and pastures, the effects of weather and rain influences water-

fowl production indirectly as it affects farming operations. Field preparations were late because of the wet fall, winter and spring with some agricultural lands located in the river bypasses still holding runoff water at the end of April. Rice seeding was as late as has been observed in the past decade. By mid-May many fields were still being worked up and planted to rice. With acreage allotments no longer in effect the rice crop has now expanded to 440,000 acres. Most of the birds left these wintering grounds during March except for those that remained to nest.

Most of the waterfowl production occurring in California is found in n.e. California and on the rice lands of the Sacramento Valley. (CFG).

A full report of numbers of nesting species and approximate populations sizes is on file with the Regional Editors.

An effort to determine what species of ducks actually nest in this Region fell far short of expectations, but the following interesting observations were made: Red-heads had the best year on record in the C.V. at Mendota (RH, KH, JS), at Woodland (RS, DW) and at Gray Lodge where over 100 immatures were banded (BD). A pair of Ring-necked Ducks at Reflection L., Lassen Co. July 12 (SL) probably nested and Buffleheads nested at several places in Lassen Co. (PM). Hooded Mergansers nested at L. Earle (*vide* DE) and a female at Palo Alto July 3 (LCB) was exceptional. A few of each of the non-breeding diving ducks always remain to summer. It appears that the Greater Scaup is predominant over Lesser and 25 of the former were at Skaggs I., July 12 (JM). Harlequin Ducks again summered at Pt. Año Nuevo as did Com. Scoters. A few Com. Scoters and more of the other scoters were reported from bays and harbors as were four different Oldsquaws.

RAPTORS THROUGH RAILS—Goshawk, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagles and Ospreys were reported breeding in more places by more individuals than is usual. Specific records, not published here, may be examined by responsible persons upon request. A Sandhill Crane was seen June 15 through the end of the period at Ferndale and is the first Humboldt County record (DA); cranes were breeding in two basin localities where they were not found last year (JM). A Com. Gallinule was at Bridgeport L. June 21 (P.R.B.O.); they are very rare east of the Sierras.

SHOREBIRDS—Migration never really stops on the California coast and individuals of most of our wintering species may be seen all summer. The following are unusual and noteworthy. On July 21, 15 Surfbirds were at the S.F. Bay Bridge toll plaza (RD). Fifty Long-billed Curlews at Pleasanton (GB) July 28 were probably early fall migrants as was a Pectoral Sandpiper at Ferndale July 29 (DA, BB). A Rufous-necked Sandpiper† in breeding plumage at Crescent City on June 18 was photographed (P. Springer, RLeV) and is the first documented record for California. Details will be published elsewhere. Two Dunlins in breeding plumage at Año Nuevo June second (PM) are at present, unexplainable. A Bar-tailed Godwit † from July 17 through the end of the period at Arcata (BR, RLeV) was seen by many and photographed for the third California record.

JAEGERs, GULLs AND TERNS—A few Pomarine Jaegers summered with Shearwaters in Monterey Bay (BGE) and offshore Humboldt Bay but there were outnumbered by Parasitics (GF, RLeV). An ad. **Long-tailed Jaeger**† was seen July 16 offshore of Humboldt, an early date for this truly rare bird (GF, RLeV).

S.A.

A breeding colony of 20-30,000 California Gulls is located on 160-acre Negit Island, a critical stopover spot for hundreds of thousands of Eared Grebes, a large fraction of the entire world's population. Mono Lake is dying!!

Because the City of Los Angeles now diverts nearly every stream that once fed this beautiful, alkali basin lake, the water level is decreasing at an alarming rate and it is estimated by the Bureau of Land Management that by 1976 a land bridge will have emerged between the shore and Negit Island allowing predators to commute and insuring ultimate if not immediate total destruction of the population. Shortly thereafter the lake will become but a puddle and the fate of the grebes is fragile.

We have mentioned this coming disaster before in this column but as far as we know, nothing has been done to reverse the situation and save millions of birds.

Won't someone out there with some spare energy, money or position and a sense of fairness for the animals with which we share the planet please investigate, organize, scream or do whatever else may be necessary, *now*, to give this fine lake and its dependent bird life a chance to live on?

A second-year Laughing Gull was still at Capitola and was photographed June 8 (BGE) for one of the few regional records. Two ad. Franklins Gulls in breeding plumage flying S together one mi. e. of Coyote (LCB) were unexpected both for locality and for age. Black-legged Kittiwakes were in fair numbers at coastal harbors and offshore (many obs.) and were even seen inside S.F. Bay (EM). The only reports for Sabine's Gulls were four or five offshore of Humboldt Bay July 13 & 16 (GF, RLeV). Few Least Terns were seen around Alameda (BGE, BJM) where small colonies have survived for the last few years on sandy bay fills but they returned to Bair I. where at least seven nests were counted July 25 (BE) and 25 individuals were seen (DDeS, JF). The San Francisco Bay population of this highly endangered species continues to balance on a thread. Open sand in San Francisco Bay with no people or dogs?!

ALCIDS—Marbled Murrelets were seen in usual numbers in Monterey Bay, from Pigeon Point and off Humboldt throughout the period. Two Xantus Murrelets were collected off the Pajaro R. mouth July third, two more were seen there July 24 and about 12 were seen with Rhinoceros Auklets in deeper water throughout the period (BGE). One hundred Cassin's Auklets and three Rhinos seen off Santa Cruz June 10 (BE, PM) may have been foraging from the Farallon Is.

S.A.

On Aug. 7, 1974 in Big Basin S. P., Santa Cruz Co., California a tree-trimmer accidentally shook a well-developed downy chick **Marbled Murrelet** from a nest 140 ft. up a douglas fir. The nest was at the crotch of a branch 15½ inches thick and 36 ft. long. Portions of the nest cup recovered revealed that it was mostly of guano. The chick was picked up alive, was photographed, expired and was prepared as a skin. It had much whitish fluffy down but was well feathered below that and the flight feathers were near fully developed, indicating that, contrary to most theories, the young may fly directly from the nest to the sea. It would have developed nearly full winter plumage and is considered probably the youngest Marbled Murrelet chick yet discovered. Enough of the egg-shell fragments were obtained to reconstruct the base and pattern colors of the original egg which agrees with Cantwell's egg from the oviduct of an adult. A detailed article with photographs is being prepared for publication elsewhere. Although Marbled Murrelets are not uncommon along the Pacific Coast north of Monterey in summer as well as in winter and adults have been heard flying inland at dusk for years, the nest, nest site and nesting behavior of this species have never been found or described and have heretofore been a mystery.

The *American Birds* Discovery Award of \$100 for the first article, with photographs, describing the nest, eggs and young of this species still stands.

DOVES THROUGH NIGHTJARS—Scattered reports of Mourning Doves from up to 10,000 ft. elevation in the Sierras are indicative of a small but regular up-mountain drift during the summer. A Flammulated Owl nest was located in an incense cedar on Henness Ridge, Mariposa Co., June 29 (DDeS, JF). A large concentration of 19 Burrowing Owls was seen near Mendota June 14 and five adults were found occupying holes near the Palo Alto Dump July 3 where they are thought to be decreasing (LCB, SS). Great Gray Owls successfully raised young at Crane Flat, Yosemite N. P. (YNP, *fide* DDeS); they did not use the nest site near Bridalveil Campground where they were seen in May (DDeS). A dead Long-eared Owl was found at Piedra, Fresno Co., June 10 (RH, KH, JS) and a pair found in nearby Auberry (*fide* RH, KH). A Poor-will was seen on the C.V. floor 3 mi. w. of Colusa June 27 (DW, TL). Three reports of Lesser Nighthawks in the San Joaquin Valley is a typically low number.

SWIFTS THROUGH WOODPECKERS—Black Swifts were commonly reported from the c. and s. Sierras. Up to six were at Año Nuevo Pt., San Mateo Co., in July and up to 12 in August (SB, JM). Five Vaux's Swift reports for the Sierra-Cascades are more than usual. A pair was found nesting at Log Meadow, Sequoia N. P. (SNP, DDeS, JF) July 6 is perhaps the first breeding record for the s. Sierras. A ♀ hummingbird believed to be a Black-chinned was at 8000 ft. at

Olmstead Pt., Yosemite N.P., July 1 (DDeS, DAG) and another at a feeder near Mineral King, Tulare Co. (el. 6935 ft.) July 7 (DDeS, JF). Three Rufous Hummingbirds were found east of the Sierra crest at the Honey Lake W.M.A. June 13 (PM). An Acorn Woodpecker in W. Oakland July 27 was in an unusually urban setting (DE). A pair of "Red-naped" Sapsuckers was nesting 6 mi. s. of Bridgeport, Mono Co., June 21 (P.R.B.O.) and "Red-breasted" Sapsucker nests were found e. of the Sierra crest at Twin Lakes and Lee Vining, Mono Co., June 21 (P.R.B.O.). Williamson's Sapsuckers were found at a number of regular localities in Yosemite N.P. and were common at 7000-9000 ft. in the Sugarloaf region of King's Canyon N.P. (RG). A Hairy woodpecker nest found June 21 near Mono L. was out of the expected boreal forest habitat (P.R.B.O.). Black-backed Woodpeckers were reported from only three regular localities in Yosemite N.P.; a pair was found in Sugarloaf Valley, King's Canyon N.P. near the s. edge of its range (RG).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS—An Eastern Kingbird was reported from Whitmore, Shasta Co., June 14 (BKI). Willow Flycatchers are quite local in the region during the breeding season. Two pairs at Zumwalt Meadows, King's Canyon N.P. and another at Mineral King (DDeS, JF) were the only Sierran reports; a pair with four young near the Carmel R. mouth Aug. 11 (SB) was the only breeding report from the coast, and individuals at Angel I., July 7 (AE) and Elk's Head, Humboldt Co., June 1 (*vide* DE) are noteworthy. Western Flycatchers were widely reported from the mid-elevation Sierras including concentrations in dense conifer stands at Grant Grove and Whittaker's Forest, King's Canyon N.P. (DDeS, RG); pairs were found as high as 8500 ft. at Rowell Meadow Sequoia Nat'l Forest. A small colony of at least six active Bank Swallow nests was discovered at Año Nuevo Pt. (JM, SB). Large numbers, up to 100 in one flock, were in the Eagle L. area, Lassen Co., (PM) in July. Purple Martins were reported from three Sierran localities, where they are scarce.

CORVIDS THROUGH THRUSHES—A rather large flock of 31 ravens were seen spiraling over Academy, Fresno Co. (RH, KH, JS). There were two flocks of Bushtits reported from high elevations in King's Canyon: six were at Converse Loop Rd., (el. 6000 ft.) July 4 (DDeS, JF) and 15-20 in Sugarloaf Valley (el. 7500 ft.) July 10 (RG). One montane species that has successfully colonized Monterey pine stands in the Berkeley hills is the Red-breasted Nuthatch; it was found in six different stands, some with only a few trees, in residential Oakland (DE). Winter Wrens were found to be widespread in sequoia groves in King's Canyon and Sequoia parks (RG). Western Bluebirds were found to be common breeders in the closed-crown mixed conifer forests of King's Canyon-Sequoia parks (DDeS, RG). Mountain Bluebirds were found at the rather low elevation of 6000 ft. at Converse Loop Rd. King's Canyon July 6 (DDeS, JF). A pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers found breeding at Eagle L., July 3 (PM) is a new local record for a well-birded area. A n.w. record was obtained for the Phainopepla at Garberville, Humboldt Co., June 2 (DE, PS, TS).

VIREOS THROUGH WARBLERS—Two Red-eyed Vireos were found in the Berkely Hills in June: one in Orinda June 26 (VR)[†] and another in Tilden Park June 2 (RD)[†]. This is exceptional, for these migrants are rarely at localities away from the outer coast. Many foothill birds drift to higher elevations during the summer months. This movement seems to be dominated by *Vermivora* warblers. Orange-crowned Warblers were reported commonly up to 9000 ft. from early June and were locally abundant in the Sierras. Nashville Warblers were very scarce in the s. Sierras until mid-July when both Orange-crowned and Nashvilles moved in en masse. At higher and more easterly regions Nashvilles outnumbered Orange-crowneds as much as 5:1 (DDeS, RG). Yellow Warblers were reported to be conspicuously absent from several riparian areas of the C.V. (BD, RH, KH, JS). It was found to be the most common warbler on the roadside census from Forest Hill to Robinson Flat, El Dorado Co., with a concentration of singing males in replanted patch cuts; a rather xeric habitat for this species in the region. Hermit Warblers were scarce in the fir forests of Sequoia-King's Canyon (DDeS, RG). However, MacGillivray's Warblers were found locally common there in early July (DDeS). A ♀ Tennessee Warbler was at Esplanada Park, Pacific Grove June 9 (DDeS) and a ♂ N. Parula was at Fairhaven, Humboldt Co., June 3 (TS *et al.*), a first county record.

BLACKBIRDS THROUGH TANAGERS—A ♀ Yellow-headed Blackbird was at Arcata June 4 (DE, GF), a vagrant to the coast in the summer. A high altitude station for Brewer's Blackbird was three at 12,500 ft. on Mt. Whitney Aug. 15 (*vide* DDeS). Western Tanagers were found at lowland localities in the midsummer with one at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area July 16 (BD) and a pair at Del Puerto Canyon July 14 (AE).

FINCHES—Male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found at Wildcat Canyon, Alameda Co., June 20 (NS, VR, SB) and June 19 in Fresno (*vide* RH, KH). A ♂ Indigo Bunting was at Fairhaven, Humboldt Co., June 5 (TS *et al.*). Singing ♂ ♂ Lazuli Buntings were seen commonly up to 7800 ft. in King's Canyon and Sequoia (DDeS, JF) and individuals were common in finch flocks over 8000 ft. in July and August. A House Finch was at an unusually high elevation at Henness Ridge June 30 (DDeS, JF). An abundance of Lesser Goldfinches was reported from the Sierras with many singing males present at high elevations during June and July (DDeS, RG). A Lawrence's Goldfinch was far above its normal foothill home at Converse Loop Rd. July 4 (DDeS, JF). The breeding of Red Crossbills in San Francisco has been established with the observation of an adult feeding fledglings in Lincoln Park June 9 (BJM) where a male was found singing on territory in March (LCB). A ♂ Lark Bunting was singing near Merced Hot Springs, Fresno Co., June 16 (PM)[†]. A high elevation observation of Savannah Sparrow was at Ellis Meadow, King's Canyon (el. 9000 ft.) July 21 (RG). There is an established colony of Grasshopper Sparrows near Coyote, Santa Clara Co. where once again singing males (3) were found in June (LCB, SS). A vagrant Vesper Sparrow was on Pt. Pinos June 9 (DDeS, JF). Coastal Lark Sparrows were at Arcata

Marina June 4 (DE) and near Bolinas, where they bred for the second year (P.R.B.O.). A singing Sage Sparrow at San Carlos, San Mateo Co., June 6 provided one of the few recent records for the SF peninsula. A Gray-headed Junco feeding fledglings near Mineral King (9500 ft.) June 22 was well described and constitutes a first breeding record for the Sierras (RH, KH, JS). Vagrant Brewer's Sparrows were reported from Fresno July 26 (RH, KH, JS) and Elk's Head, Humboldt Co., June 1 (*fide* DE). Most surprising was the location of three singing males in two replanted clear-cuts 10 mi. e. of Foresthill June 24. A singing ♂ Black-chinned Sparrow was also at one of the localities (DDeS, JF) the same day. Another of this species returned for the third straight year to P.R.B.O., Marin Co. (P.R.B.O.), but as last spring only for one day, May 15. A vagrant singing male White-crowned Sparrow (with white lores) was at the brush field east of Foresthill June 24 (DDeS, JF).

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CORRIGENDA—Under the section dealing with accipiter ratios (*Am. Birds* 28:687) the observers' initials should read (RBH, KH, JS) not (RBH, LH, JS). In the same paragraph, dealing with Red-shouldered Hawks the observers were (RBH, KH, JS) not (RBH, LH, HK, JS). One, not two Bonaparte's Gulls at L. Shastina (*Am. Birds* 28:688). Red-naped Sapsucker is *S.V. nuchalis* not *varius* (*Am. Birds* 28:689) also in that paragraph the entire statement beginning "A Hairy Woodpecker" should be withdrawn. The Rough-winged Swallows (*Am. Birds* 28:689) were not the first regional winter records but were possibly the fifth and sixth. In *Am. Birds* 28:690 dealing with the Chipping Sparrows the passage should read . . . but a flock of up to 79 at Avacado L., Fresno Co. (RBH, KH, JS) December-February is quite surprising. In the list of contributors (*Am. Birds* 28:691) John Silva should read John Silvas.

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