

**MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION**  
**/Rich Stallcup and Jon Winter**

Summer in Northern California, with the exception of a single four day heat wave in July, was cool. June was mild and rather showery like an April and July weather was erratic. Several snowstorms in the Sierras and rains in the lowlands were unseasonal but had no noticable effect on breeding Passerines. At Calaveras State Park, June had a colder minimum average than in

several years at 44° F. with an extreme of 30° and the average maximum 76.6°. For July, the average minimum was 49.7° and the maximum, 82.1° (MK).

In the Central Valleys (below C.V.) reduced rice plantings were responsible for lower production of ducks and Black Terns there.

The unparalleled late May, early June wave of "eastern" land birds on the Farallon Islands continued heavier than is normal through June and more than average individuals were recorded in July.

Two species, the Chimney Swift and the Water Pipit, both new to California's breeding avifauna were discovered this season.

A dagger following initials means that the observer has submitted a written description to the Regional Editors.

**LOONS THROUGH HERONS** — All species of loons were relatively scarce this summer at Pajaro Dunes (J&RW) but 20 was a large number of Commons at Limantour July 16 (P.R.B.O.) and 75 were at Crescent City June 21 (SS), mostly in winter plumage. Three were noted inland at odd localities. At Limantour 84 Arctic Loons, July 16 (P.R.B.O.), eight at Half Moon Bay July 19 (PM) and ten at Pajaro July 28 (J&RW) were probably oversummering although a few were in high plumage. Only ten Red-throated Loons were found. A Red-necked Grebe at Limantour July 10, 16 (P.R.B.O.) was most likely summering as were two Horned Grebes each at Belmont June 10 - July 8 (PM) and Crescent City June 21 (SS). Eared Grebes had more young than ever at Woodland and at least seven broods were fledged (RS). A single Eared was at 11,000 ft. at Summit L., Mono Co. July 24 (TH)! Usual numbers of



W. Grebes summered on the coast and nesting success was good in the Basin (TH, P.R.B.O.). About 60 Black-footed Albatrosses summered in Monterey Bay (BGE) and Pink-footed Shearwaters were very numerous there. Thirty Pink-footed were counted from Pigeon Pt. July 22 (PM,BS). Two Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels were off Moss Landing July 12 when numbers of Ashy Storm-Petrels were beginning to build (BGE) and one was found dead at Pajaro June 15 (J&RW). Unlike last year no Black Storm-Petrels were seen (BGE), probably owing to cooler water.

White Pelicans were first noted in S.F. Bay July 22 at Alameda (WMP, JR) and various numbers were at several "east side" lakes through July (m.ob.). Brown Pelicans were in very good numbers with high percentages of brown-headed birds. Of 486 seen on the San Mateo coast during June, 330 were immature and on July 25 at Pajaro of 938, 50 per cent were immature (J&RW). On July 29, 15 Green Herons ("young hatched") were seen on the American R. at Sacramento (*fide* BK). Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons suffered heavy nest casualties at Audubon Canyon Ranch when several Raccoons learned to scale the Redwood trees. After the marauders were trapped and relocated some birds nested again (*fide* P.R.B.O.). A single Cattle Egret was near Gray Lodge July 15 (*fide* BK). Two Least Bitterns were found in the n. C.V. in June, one at Gray Lodge (SL) and one west of Chico June 25 (JS). The species is undoubtedly more common here than records suggest. A single Am. Bittern was at s. L. Tahoe June 26 (WS).

**WATERFOWL** — A partially crippled ad. Whistling Swan successfully summered at Chico (SL,RS). At Bridgeport L. 50 pairs of Canada Geese nested in tubs put out for them by C.F. & G. (TH). The usual few Black Brant summered along the coast (total: 17). Gadwall nested w. of Benton, 30 young on July 29 and at Crowley L., 24 young on July 31 (TH). Four ♂ Blue-winged Teal, the latest June 21, were reported (m.ob.). Two American Wigeon, one of the rarest ducks in summer, were at Chico July 21 (RS,GM) and one was at Limantour July 10 (P.R.B.O.). The only Wood Duck success indicated was of three immatures in the San Antonio Valley July 5 (GB) and three at Snake L., Plumas Co. July 20 (RS,DAG,GM). Red-heads had low production at Woodland with only two broods (RS), but 15 pairs and 27 young at Baum L., Shasta Co. (SL) were impressive numbers for a small lake. Three Ring-necked Ducks summered at Chico (SL,RS) but did not breed. A pair at Manzanita L., Shasta Co., (SL) and two males and a female at L. Earl June 21 (SS) were at likely nesting localities. A total of 14 Canvasbacks was found summering in the C.V. (m.ob.) and at Belmont (PM). Sixty Greater and 19 Lesser Scaup were reported from the s. portions of the region. One ♂ Com. Goldeneye and three ♂ Buffleheads were on Eagle L. July 5 (PM). Only two ♀ Harlequin Ducks summered at Ano Nuevo (m.ob.) which is fewer than usual. Very few Surf and White-winged Scoters summered and for the first time in several years there were no Black Scoters. Common Mergansers bred successfully on the Kings R. near Kirch Flat at Rapids (RH,CA) and in the C.V. near Red Bluff (SL).

**HAWKS THROUGH RAILS** — Five Goshawks were reported (m.ob.), which was more than Cooper's and Sharp-shinned combined. Of course this is not the actual case. Swainson's Hawks were more evident in the C.V. than in several years and were noted nesting at five localities there (m.ob.). Dark phase birds here are about one in four but usually pair together. Few Golden Eagles were reported (six) but Bald Eagles in the Northeast were quite evident with nine, and at least two nests were successful. Marsh Hawks nested at Benicia S.P. and at the San Pablo Bay Marsh (FKB). Ospreys had good nesting success along rivers of the n. coast (m.ob.) and at least eight pairs nested at Eagle L. on platforms (PM). Two pairs frequented Bolinas Lagoon all summer and probably nested nearby. Singles were reported from s. L. Tahoe (JR) and Topaz L. (TH). Three Prairie Falcons, one near Vallejo July 1 (JR), and two in Mono Co. in July (TH) were the only large falcons seen. Virginia Rails were found at every locality surveyed in Mono Co. "if more than two tules present" and Sora was a "common breeder" there (TH). Contrarily, no Yellow Rails could be found there because "every damn meadow with grass has cows" (TH).

**SHOREBIRDS** — Semipalmated Plovers returned in July as usual, the earliest being Bridgeport L. July 4 (TH) and Emeryville July 5 (RD). Snowy Plovers bred at Belmont and Pescadero (PM) and after a late start owing to spring storms had good success at the Pajaro Dunes where ten nests were found (only seven last year) (J&RW). An Am. Golden Plover in partial breeding plumage June 21 at L. Talawa (SS†) provided the first regional summer record. The first Surfbirds were at Ano Nuevo July 21 (BS). Twelve Ruddy Turnstones were at Ano Nuevo July 13 (AE,GB) and different singles were at Woodland July 21 (*fide* BK) and July 29 (RS,GM). The latter two are the only inland records for July. Rice fields attracted at least 24 Whimbrels July 30 near Woodland (RS,VE). This is more than usually seen all fall in that area. On July 28, 41 Spotted Sandpipers were counted between Red Bluff and Woodson Bridge (S&PL) which is very high density. Four Wandering Tattlers at Humboldt July 29 (SS,SL) and two at Ano Nuevo July 21 (BS) were early.

Two Willets at Black L., Mono Co. July 2 (TH) were interesting, since this is a possible nesting locale. Red Knots were first reported from four different places July 26-28 (WMP,AE, JR, J&RW) indicating a fairly accurate arrival date. A Baird's Sandpiper at Emeryville July 5 (RD) was quite early and a Dunlin in breeding plumage at Limantour July 10 & 16 (P.R.B.O.) must have been summering. A Short-billed Dowitcher at Chico July 21 (RS,GM) was the only dowitcher present and called constantly. The first Long-billeds were at Woodland July 6 (*fide* BK) and one at Fresno July 16 was "the earliest returnee yet" (RH). American Avocets nested for the first time at Pajaro Dunes and of four eggs only one immature survived (J&RW). Because of low water and exposed, baked mud, Black-necked Stilts nested for the first time at Chico sewage ponds (SL,RS,GM). At Woodland a count of 750 Wilson's Phalaropes July 12 was high and most or all were females in breeding plumage. Only 60 N. Phalaropes were present (RS *et al.*).

**JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS** — The first Pomarine Jaegers seen were three adults from Pigeon Pt. July 22 (PM,BS). A Skua "almost certainly *macrorhynchos*" was in Monterey Bay July 26 (BGE). A very worn imm. Thayer's Gull was photographed at Emeryville July 5 (RD) and had no doubt summered locally. An ad. **Laughing Gull** at Pt. Pinos June 27 (P.R.B.O.) may have been the same bird seen at Pajaro Dunes Apr. 24 (J&RW). There are only five regional records. Of 40 Bonaparte's Gulls at L. Talawa June 21 only three were in breeding plumage (SS). Only nine Least Terns were reported. They are definitely endangered in this region. Except for one at Alameda June 14 (JR), Elegant Terns were late and few (m.ob.). Caspian Terns were felt to be more common than ever on the e. shore of S.F. Bay (DE).

On July 16, 19 Pigeon Guillemots were seen at Limantour (P.R.B.O.). Fifty Marbled Murrelets reported were considerably more than usual. Most were from Half Moon Bay and Pescadero (PM). Two Xantus' Murrelets were 6 mi. e. of the Farallon Is. (below F.I.) June 25 (P.R.B.O.). A single Rhinoceros Auklet seen from Pescadero (PM,BS) was either very early or was foraging from the F.I. *Three Horned Puffins* 3 to 10 mi. e. of the F.I. June 15 (P.R.B.O.), one dead at Pajaro Dunes July 27 (J&RW) and one beached alive at San Francisco July 29 (*fide* LCB) were but a shadow of this late spring's invasion to Southern California waters. A Tufted Puffin in breeding plumage flew north past Pigeon Pt. July 16 (BS,PM); it is increasing as a breeder on the F.I. (P.R.B.O.).

#### S. A.

Two to five Chimney Swifts were seen and heard at Davis in June and early July (DW,TL *et al.*) and on July 4 two birds were observed entering a brick chimney. One was carrying a twig (RS,GM). During July and into August the birds were observed often about the chimney by many competent birders. We did not collect anything or even harass these birds, so it is not absolute that a nest was involved. The chimney and the birds are still being watched, however, and the outcome will be discussed in the next issue of *American Birds*.

Another pair of Chimney Swifts nested and successfully raised young from a chimney in Ft. Bragg (LH†,KT†). They were watched throughout the period and their taped calls are on file with the editors.

These are the first nesting attempts of Chimney Swifts detected in California and, taken with the other records this summer may suggest an abnormal westward push or even a lost flock, individuals of which chose to homestead.

**PIGEONS THROUGH SWIFTS** — Spotted Doves, first noted in the winter of 1973 in Fresno, are apparently increasing in number there (RH). A total of four reports of Yellow-billed Cuckoo were received which is about average for the season. Single birds were found at Big Chico Creek June 17, Chico Landing July 30 n. of Glenn July 5 (SFB), and on the F.I. the second week of

June (P.R.B.O.). Flammulated Owls were reported from three known locations; three at Big Oak Flat n.e. of Foresthill July 6-7 (JW,TH), three at Forest Ranch July 4-5 (SFB) and one at Henness Ridge July 17 (SFB). Single Spotted Owls were found at Carpenter Ridge, Butte Co., June 20 (JS), Big Oak Flat July 6 (TH) and two were seen at Montgomery Woods S.P. June 28 (OJK). This species is far more common than is generally suspected. An encouraging number of Burrowing Owl reports from the Sacramento area indicated that several nests successfully produced young this summer (*fide* BK).

On June 25 the temperature dipped to 27°F at Duncan Park (7182 ft), Placer Co., as a result of a freak snowstorm. That evening a Poor-will was heard calling actively in spite of the unseasonable temperatures (JW). Such observations make one wonder about the mechanisms of torpidity! Common Nighthawks, not known to nest in the Sacramento Valley, were observed during June and July along the Sacramento River, at Red Bluff (SL). Although formerly fairly common in Fresno Co., Lesser Nighthawks are now quite rare. A single bird seen at Clovis July 10 is noteworthy (*fide* RH). A total of 27 Black Swifts was reported from the Sierra Nevada June 1 - July 27 which is normal for the period. The nesting distribution of this species throughout the state needs clarification. In addition to the Chimney Swifts found in Davis and Ft. Bragg (see S.A.) six birds were seen on the F.I. June 11-15 (P.R.B.O.) and a single bird was noted and described at Bolinas Lagoon July 19 (JM†). Prior to this summer there were only two documented regional records! Since the breeding distribution of the Vaux's Swift is rather sketchy throughout the region, observations of single birds at Lassen and Bucks Creek, Warner Mts. June 21 and June 18 (DW) and one at Mineral, Tehama Co. July 6 (SS) are of interest. The bird is not known to breed in the Warner Mts.

**HUMMINGBIRD THROUGH SWALLOWS** — A ♂ Black-chinned Hummingbird, uncommon along the coast, summered at a feeder in Concord (JR). Costa's Hummingbirds now appear to be regular breeders at Del Puerto Canyon (AE). Migrant Rufous Hummingbirds were first noted in the C.V. at Courtland July 1 (*fide* BK). Calliope Hummingbirds were found to be common at Yuba Pass June 25 (*fide* BK). Populations of this species in the Sierra appear to fluctuate rather noticeably from year to year. Two observations of **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** for the period indicate that our knowledge of this species in the region is limited. A male found on June 30 west of Lee Vining represents the first Sierra record and may have been breeding (TH,RS). Another male found on July 9 at Skunk Cabbage Creek in the Warner Mts. is the first found in that range (DW†). These sightings are the second and third records for the region. Three Pileated Woodpeckers at each of three locations were reported: Placer Co., Big Trees July 7 (TH), Inverness Ridge July 6 (NS), and 11 mi. n. of Gualala July 24 (OJK). Lewis' Woodpecker, a rather rare nester in the Sierra, appears to have bred at s. L. Tahoe. A pair was seen feeding a young bird July 17 (WS). A mixed pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers of the races (*S.v.nuchalis*

and *S.v. ruber*) was found nesting in the Warner Mts. at Buck Creek June 18 (DW). Three observations of nesting Williamson's Sapsuckers from the Sierra seem to reinforce the opinion that (outside of Yosemite) this species is more common on the e. side of the Snowy Range (TH). A pair of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers was reported to be nesting again at Yuba Pass June 12 (WMP *et al.*) and a female was at Summit L., Shasta Co. July 6. An E. Kingbird was seen June 17 just s. of New Pine Creek, Modoc Co. (DW). Breeding of the species is definitely a possibility here. Upslope drift accounted for a W. Kingbird at Duncan Peak, July 9 (JW). Willow Flycatchers were noted from three new locations. Two were found at Big Bend Campground e. of Lee Vining July 3, another was seen at Devil's Postpile N.M. July 31 (TH) and a singing bird was at Mineral, Tehama Co., July 6 (SS).

A Tree Swallow was seen at 9000 ft. on Ralston Peak near L. Tahoe June 14 (WS). Unusual was the observation of 16 Bank Swallows at the Chico Sewage Ponds July 21 (RS). An observation of two Barn Swallows July 24 at 9840 ft. over Horseshoe Meadows near Lone Pine may be the highest elevation record of this species for the state (TH). Because of the record spring runoff of water from the mountains, Cliff Swallows along the California Aqueduct between Oilfields and Huron, Fresno Co. had most of their nests washed away, causing a noticeable nesting failure in the area (*fide* RH). Purple Martins appear to be holding their own in the C.V. where several colonies produced young (*fide* BK) while a total of 13 birds were reported along the coast from San Mateo Co. to the Eel R. n. of Ukiah June 15 - July 13 (PM, OJK).

#### — S. A. —

Water Pipits have occasionally been seen in the summer at high elevations in the Sierras and Cascades and nesting of that species has been suspected but heretofore unrecorded.

On Aug. 1, a nest with four young was found at about 10,500 ft. in the Harvey Hall Natural Area near Saddlebag L., Mono Co. (BE). The nest was well concealed beneath a dense clump of mountain heather. The young had fledged by Aug. 17 but two adults were feeding two fledglings and three additional birds (probably two adults and one fledgling) were seen there Aug. 21 (DDeS, DAG, BE). At least one and possibly two nests were successful in the area. This is the first documented nesting of Water Pipit in California.

**CORVIDS THROUGH VIREOS** — Always scarce in the n. Sierra, a Com. Raven was seen at 9000 ft. on Ralston Peak near L. Tahoe, July 19 (WS) and a pair nested in Battle Creek Canyon, Tehama Co. (SL). The southernmost record for Black-capped Chickadee was made at King Salmon July 25 (*fide* DE). A nesting White-breasted Nuthatch was reported from Lassen Volcano N.P. at the unusual elevation of 7000 ft. July 1 (SL). Red-breasted Nuthatches were reported as being down from last year's numbers at the Sequoia Big Trees S.P. (MK). After having successfully nested for nine

seasons at Duncan Peak, Placer Co., Rock Wrens failed to return this summer (JW). The late, heavy snows may have discouraged breeding. The second regional **Bendire's Thrasher** was seen on the F.I., July 14 (P.R.B.O.). A Sage Thrasher was seen well west of its normal range at the Arcata Oxidation Ponds July 19 (SL, SS).

A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** found on the F.I. June 11 became the seventh regional record for this species (P.R.B.O.). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher found at 9000 ft. on the w. side of Echo L. July 19 is noteworthy (WS), however a post-breeding, upslope drift of a number of foothill species is a common phenomenon in the Sierra. Phainopeplas appear to be continuing a known historical northern expansion of their range in California and a nest was found in Redding June 5 (SL). Records of Red-eyed Vireos continue to mount from the F.I. as a single bird was found June 15 and two more on June 20 (P.R.B.O.). The region's sixth **Philadelphia Vireo** turned up on the F.I. June 12 (P.R.B.O.). This is the first spring occurrence of this species for the region.

**WOOD WARBLERS THROUGH TANAGERS** — A spillover of a number of eastern warblers occurring on the F.I. was recorded well into July as a result of this spring's awesome Parulid migration there. Black-and-white Warblers were recorded on the F.I. in both June and July and eight Tennessee Warblers were counted June 8-24 (P.R.B.O.). A total of 12 Magnolia Warblers was found on the F.I. June 8-24 and a single bird was noted there July 4 (P.R.B.O.). Four more Cape May Warblers found on the F.I. June 8-24 bring the region's total number of spring occurrences for this species to nine (P.R.B.O.). One Black-throated Green Warbler, always a prize in spring, was seen June 12 on the F.I. and rare in spring, a Chestnut-sided Warbler was seen there June 15 (P.R.B.O.). A single Bay-breasted Warbler was on the island June 20 and most unusual was the presence of a Palm Warbler there July 3-5 (P.R.B.O.). There were no July records for this species in the region and few for June. Ovenbirds staged a minor invasion on the F.I. where 11 were recorded June 11-July 1 and the region's fifth **Kentucky Warbler** landed on the F.I. June 16 (P.R.B.O.). Encouraging was the discovery that Yellow-breasted Chats were "fairly common" along the Eel R. in Mendicino and Lake Cos. (PM). A ♂ Hooded Warbler (a different individual from the one listed in the spring report) was seen on the F.I. June 8 (P.R.B.O.). An observation of a ♂ Wilson's Warbler feeding a young Brown-headed Cowbird at Muir Beach, Marin Co. June 22 is noteworthy (AE). The region's second spring occurrence of a **Canada Warbler** was noted on the F.I. June 12-16 (P.R.B.O.). American Redstarts were seen on the F.I. June 9-16 where eight birds were tallied (P.R.B.O.). There are records for this species in the region for every month of the year. Unusual on the coast in summer, 40-50 Tricolored Blackbirds were seen at Pt. Reyes June 22 (AE). Three Hooded Orioles at Novato July 30 (RS) and two at Woodson Bridge S.P., Tehama Co. (SS) were north of their usual range the latter, probably a first county record.

**FRINGILLIDS** — A startling 18 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks occurred on the F.I. June 1-21 (P.R.B.O.). There are records for every month of the year for this species in the region. Blue Grosbeaks were reported in excellent numbers from the C.V. A singing ad. ♂ Indigo Bunting was seen in Patterson Meadow in the Warner Mts. June 23 (DW). This is not the first record there. Singing males were reported at three locations on the e. slope of the Sierra (TH), another at Foothill Park, Palo Alto (*fide* DDeS) and one in Kings Canyon N.P. (RH) all in June and July. Breeding of this bunting is to be expected and should be looked for, but it is likely that most pair with Lazulis if at all. Evening Grosbeaks were found to be common at Robinson Flat, Placer Co. (JW) and at the Sequoia Big Trees S.P. (MK) all summer. Pine Grosbeak numbers appeared to be up in the n. Sierra. They were found to be common at s. L. Tahoe (WS) and several were at Robinson Flat (JW) all summer. Twelve Gray-crowned Rosy Finches were found at Golden Trout L. near Bishop (*fide* TH). Red Crossbills were found to be common at Snag L., Lassen Volcano N.P. with many in juvenile plumage July 31 (SL). Seldom found in Marin Co., Grasshopper Sparrows were on territory on Inverness Ridge near Olema in mid-June (NS). The region's first summer record of a "Slate-colored" Junco was banded on the F.I. and remained there between June 11-23 (P.R.B.O.). The fourth regional record of a Cassin's Sparrow was of one on the F.I. June 12 (P.R.B.O.). Very rare in spring and summer a Clay-colored Sparrow was on the F.I. June 9-13 (P.R.B.O.). Most remarkable was the banding of an ad. ♂ Harris' Sparrow in Benicia by Emerson Stoner July 8. This is the region's first summer record for this species.

**CONTRIBUTORS** — Carol Andersen, Karen Bailey, Steven F. Bailey, Gordon Beebe, Frank K. Beyer, Laurence C. Binford, George Bing, Valeria Da Costa, Richard Dean, Bruce Deuel, Dave DeSante, Art Edwards, Bruce G. Elliott (BGE), Vic Emanuel, Brett Engstrom (BE), Dick Erickson, David A. Gaines, Keith Hansen, Rob Hansen, Tom Heindel, Linda Hollenback, Lawrence E. Jerome, Margaret Keith, Betty Kimball, Oliver J. Kolkman, Phyllis Laymon, Steven A. Laymon, Tom Love, Baron McLean, Bill Manolis, Georgianne Manolis, Peter Metropulos, Randall Morgan, Joe Morlan, Gary Page, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, William M. Pursell, R.J. Richardson, Jean Richmond, Barry Sauppe, Dave Shuford, Tom Schulenberg, Jim Snowden, Dixie Sperling, Rich Stallcup, Lynn Stenzel, Nick Story, Steve Summers, Walley Sumner, Kris Tyner, John and Ricky Warriner, Bruce Williford, Dave Winkler, Jon Winter, Bob Yutzy — **RICH STALLCUP**, 4409 44th Avenue, Sacramento, Calif., 95824 and **JON WINTER**, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Bolina, Calif., 94924.

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**Christmas Bird Count dates**  
**Dec. 20, 1975 - Jan. 4, 1976**

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