

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION /Rich Stallcup, Jon Winter

The only water there is on earth is the only water there is. And this spring it definitely is not in the Middle Pacific Coast Region. It was the second driest year on record (since the drought of 1863-64 when 2.5 million cattle died in the Central Valley [below C.V.] and the impact on native plants and animals must have been devastating.) The drought caused some inland waterbirds to leave early and will certainly affect clutch size and overall fledgling production of most species. By the end of the period, herons and ducks were obviously absent from most usual heavy breeding areas. The best spring ever for pelagic bird observations and another superb marsh and heron rookery goes down to the torch and the tractor.



LOONS THROUGH STORM-PETRELS — From Apr. 1 to May 22 Barry Sauppe *et al.* spent six to eight hours per day for 20 days censusing migrant seabirds as they passed Pigeon Point (below P.P.) and almost 194,000 individuals were identified and counted. Loons, 90% Arctic, 5% Red-throated and 5% Common totalled 56,544 the highest day's count being on Apr. 21, when 8825 were tallied. Significant numbers were still moving at the end of May. A Yellow-billed Loon was in Monterey Harbor Apr. 28 (RS, B). There are now 12 records from this locality. Red-throated at L. Bon Tempe Apr. 2 (JM) and at Pescadero Apr. 15 (PM) were onshore. Horned Grebes persisted in good numbers inland and nine at Calaveras Res., Apr. 14 (DE) were representative. Many more Black-footed Albatrosses than usual were seen this spring, particularly north of San Francisco; 26 on May 9 between Bodega and Cordell Banks (R.R.O.S.), 1000 May 21 off Humboldt (RLV, JG) and 500 May 29 off Humboldt (SH). The 1000 probably surpasses all previous observations here. Laysan Albatrosses were seen off Humboldt; one May 21 and at least three May 29. Northern Fulmars continued to be common off the s. part of the region and of 143 noted passing P.P., 116 were dark and 27 were light (BS *et al.*) a normal ratio. One found dead near Coyote Hills May 9 (*fide* DE) provided our only record for the e. shore of S.F. Bay. A single Flesh-footed Shearwater was with Pink-footeds off Humboldt May 8 (BED). There are very few spring records. Nearly 30,000 Sooty Shearwaters passed P.P. (BS *et al.*) which is high for spring. Storm-Petrels were very common and all three northern species were recorded. Between the Farallon Is. (below F.I.) and Eureka, 84 Fork-taileds, five Leach's and over 20 Ashies were seen. All were during May on only six single-day trips.

PELICANS THROUGH HERONS — First returning Brown Pelicans were at Pajaro Dunes in the second week of April (J&RW) but were not evident elsewhere until early May. A Great Blue heronry on the San Lorenzo R. near Santa Cruz fledged young in late May (TB, PM). Another ad. Little Blue Heron was at Bolinas from May 11 (P.R.B.O.) to at least May 24 (WMP). In the C.V. Great Egrets were in flocks foraging the abnormally dry fields for mice and near Gray Lodge no nesting had been noted for these, Snowy Egrets or Black-crowned Night Herons at the end of the period. Hundreds of night herons usually nest there. Through April, Cattle Egrets dwindled at Humboldt and only five were present May 8. Humboldt is the only regular spring Cattle Egret spot in the region. A Least Bittern was seen at Gray Lodge May 20 (BED) and Am. Bitterns were noted doing well and as more adaptable to drought conditions than other Ciconiiformes in the C.V. (RS, SAL).

Anderson Marsh at Clear Lake is one of the very finest marshes in the inner Coast range and its Great Blue heronry is now virtually history. Carmen Patterson writes "I checked the Anderson Marsh Heron 'Rookery' Apr. 30 (20-30 pairs have nested there in the riparian border for many years) and it had been abandoned, probably due to the extensive burning and plowing of the marsh. The tractors were still at work turning under the last remaining tules. In two days of watching, I didn't see even one heron return to a nest although they remained in the area. Out in the former marsh I found one remaining Virginia Rail trying to hide in a tiny patch of burnt

stubble which the plow had missed. I was unable to locate any of the many yellowthroats which formerly bred there and the Yellow-headed Blackbirds were also gone."

It seems that in nearly every issue we have the painful task of reporting another woodland or marshland paved. Millions of us have voted, campaigned and put all our money and our energies in saving our sibling creatures and vegetation from the machinery of "progress", and we have often cried. The time will soon come that many of us can hurt no more and will move to other methods. [?!-Ed.].

WATERFOWL — Most Canada and white geese left relatively early and ducks which normally breed at open water either departed or turned to other wet areas. "Lesser" Canada Geese moved early into open habitat to the north and "honkers" similarly early into the N. Sierra and Great Basin. "Cackling" Geese were latest in the C.V. with 100 north over Tehama County Apr. 19 (SAL) and 47 still at Gray Lodge Apr. 26 (BED). Of 14,039 Black Brant seen to pass P.P., 9201 on Apr. 14 was the peak (BS *et al.*). A single Brant with many hundred Black Brant flew N over Limantour Apr. 17 (J&SL, DE, RS). White-fronted Geese were seen migrating over Tehama County Apr. 18 & 19 (SAL) and the last at Gray Lodge were 300 on Apr. 26 (BED). Sixteen were migrating near Gridley May 1 (SAL). A single Ross' Goose was at Abbott's Lagoon May 13 (DS), out-of-range and very late. Pintails and wigeons were in large, late flocks in the C.V. (RS, BED). Mallards went to rice paddies as refuge and other usually permanent waters dried up and they seemed to be off to an excellent start. Gadwalls, however, reluctant to leave the tules may do poorly here this summer (BED, RS). A ♀ Eurasian Wigeon was still at Bolinas Apr. 9 (JM, J&SL). Wood Ducks nested at Anadel S.P. (DS) and very successfully n.e. of Merced where 20 of 100 nest boxes in a newly established program were occupied (*fide* BED). Fifty Redheads at a flooded field near Gray Lodge Apr. 5 and other good numbers in the northern C.V. in April dropped as water disappeared. Few stayed to breed at Gray Lodge and none at Woodland (BED, RS). At Red Bluff, a migrant flock of 46 Ring-necked Ducks Apr. 9 was high (SAL). As many as eight Greater Scaup were at Tahoe Keyes from mid-April to May (WS). A ♂ Com. Goldeneye was at Crescent City Apr. 15 where they are rare (BED). A Barrow's at Tahoe Keyes as late as Apr. 20 (WS) may have been the bird which wintered there. The last Oldsquaw was at Arcata May 25 (KT, DRu). Of 29,132 Scoters which passed P.P. during censusing, 98% were Surf, 2% White-winged and only 3 Blacks were identified (BS). A White-winged was at Tahoe Apr. 27 - May 1 (Hart, WS). Six Red-breasted Mergansers were seen inland (m.ob.).

RAPTORS THROUGH COOTS — A White-tailed Kite over Auburn May 28 (BBa) was heading east! They are rare in and on the e. side of the Sierras. Swainson's Hawks continue to recover slightly in the C.V. from a slump in the 1960s. Individuals and pairs were reported from many localities (m.ob.) and six nests were located in the Sacramento-Davis area (RS). A Rough-legged Hawk at Colusa Apr. 2 and one near Sacramento May 1 (*fide* BK) were the only ones this spring as was a single Ferruginous Hawk near Olema Apr. 6 (DE). Golden Eagles are doing fine but a single imm. Bald Eagle at Santa Rosa Apr. 20 (CP) was the only one reported.

Marsh Hawk sightings were clearly up from average in the C.V. (BED,RS) possibly because small birds and rodents became reckless in their quests for water. Forty-two migrant Ospreys noted was three times the spring average. A few Prairie Falcons were encouraging and one at Cape Mendicino May 16 (*fide* TS) was late for a migrant. The last winter Peregrines were seen Apr. 24 and the last Merlin Apr. 17.

Turkeys seem to be well established on Mines Road and at Del Valle Park (AE, DE) and less so in the Sacramento area (*fide* BK). Blue Grouse are quite common in the high Sierra near timberline and ten calling males were reported from three localities in Yosemite including four on Mt. Hoffman May 22 (*fide* TB). Tish-tang Camp near Willow Creek remains the best spot in the region for Ruffed Grouse and three males were drumming there Apr. 20 (WS). At Crowley L. 19 ♂ Sage Grouse still booming May 8 seemed very late (RS,B). A single Sandhill Crane at Año Nuevo May 9 (S&SS) was lost. Virginia and Sora Rails were either very low in numbers or non-vocal at Gray Lodge and Woodland (BED,RS) and the only Black Rail reported was calling at Olema Apr. 17 (RS,J&SL,DE). Common Gallinules were reduced to climbing willow trees and eating catkins in the C.V. (BED).

SHOREBIRDS — Snowy Plovers had a rough time breeding at Pajaro Dunes, where of only four nests located two were inundated by rising water behind a closed beach and one was covered by sand during high winds (J&RW). An Am. Golden Plover was at P.P. Apr. 20 (PM) and a very late one at Santa Cruz May 28 (TB *et al.*). Surfbirds stage in spring and migrate in generally larger flocks than they winter. At Pescadero, however 310 on Apr. 20 (PM) was unusually high. On the Sacramento R. between Red Bluff and Tehama May 16, 45 Spotted Sandpipers were counted and one nest was found (SA&PL). A Willet was at Tahoe Keyes Apr. 20, one at Indian Creek Res., Alpine Co., May 1 (WS) and one was displaying at Crowley L. May 8 (RS,B). A Rock Sandpiper was at Pescadero Apr. 20 (PM). Four Pectoral Sandpipers at Bolinas during late April (P.R.B.O.) equals all previous spring records. A Baird's at Gray Lodge Mar. 31 (BED) was the only one this spring. A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Abbott's Lagoon June 16 (GP,LS*,P.R.B.O.*). It was perfectly described and is the first definite spring record. The first regional spring **Bar-tailed Godwit** was at Bodega Bay Apr. 17 (BJM*). Black-necked Stilts, rare in Sonoma County, were at Petaluma Apr. 21 (CP) and May 6 (BDP); three and two respectively. After Apr. 11, Red Phalaropes were everywhere along the coast followed by Northern after Apr. 27 (m.ob.). A single Red was at Woodland May 2 (*fide* BK). Only two Wilson's were reported from the outer coast, one May 11 at Pajaro Dunes (J&RW) and one May 22 at Bolinas (DS).

JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS — At P.P., 42 Pomarine and only one Parasitic Jaegers passed during censusing (BS *et al.*). An ad. **Black-headed Gull** in winter plumage was found at Marshall April 5 (BSO) and was studied thoroughly through April 8 (m.ob.). Adult Franklin's Gulls were at Arcata Apr. 12 (*fide* TS) and at sea off Humboldt May 21 (RLeV *et al.*). At P.P. 36,979 Bonaparte's Gulls passed during censusing, one third of

which were tallied April 24 (BS *et al.*). A second-year Heermann's Gull remained through April in near Sausalito (AE,RS,G.G.A.S.). Black-legged Kittiwakes were very common and 701 passed P.P. (BS *et al.*). Of 40 at Bodega Bay Apr. 24, 70% were adults (RS,B). The only San Mateo County record for Sabine's Gull was in 1896 until 1976 when BS *et al.* recorded 323 passing P.P. in mid-Apr. May 18 was the peak with 171. From P.P. 1864 Forster's and only 83 Com. Terns passed by. April 24 was the Forster's peak and May 12 the Common's (BS *et al.*). A partly-oiled Arctic Tern was at the Salinas R. mouth Apr. 28 (RS,B) and 15 were noted near Cordell Banks May 9 (R.R.O.S.). An Elegant Tern, providing only our second spring record, was at Emeryville May 15 (SL). Several Black Terns, normally at inland passage were noted along the coast (m.ob.) including one, 8 mi. w. of Bodega May 9 (R.R.O.S.) and one, 3 mi. w. of Humboldt May 21 (RLeV, JG). Three Xantus' and ten Ancient Murrelets were on Monterey Bay Apr. 4 (LCB, SFB). A Tufted Puffin in high plumage passed P.P. to the NW carrying fish. (BS).

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS — Band-tailed Pigeons have been "virtually absent" in e. Alameda County all year (AE). The trichomoniosis epidemic noted last spring may be spreading. A Spotted Owl's nest that contained two young was located near Markleeville (*fide* WS). This may be the first Alpine County record for the species, but the avifauna of the area is poorly known. A migrant or wintering Long-eared Owl remained in Patterson Pass Apr. 4-May 2 (DE *et al.*). A single Saw-whet Owl was reported May 10 from the Cleary Biological Reserve in Napa County (DE). This species, like the Pygmy Owl, is more common in the coast range, however it occurs in the Sierra and more data is needed to clarify its status there. A seasonal high of ten Com. Nighthawks was seen May 31 over Indian Creek Res., near Markleeville (JH). This species' status in the Sierra is somewhat erratic. In some seemingly optimum locations it is rare and in others it is almost common. The reasons for this spotty distribution are probably ecological in nature. Black Swifts in the Porterville area have been observed exhibiting an interesting foraging pattern. Consistently during the month of May they were seen moving west into the C.V. very early in the morning. In the evening they were seen moving east back toward the Sierra in groups of from one-14 birds (RAB). A similar pattern of foraging in adjacent valleys has been observed in Com. Nighthawks. A single Black Swift was at Solano L. May 9 (DW). Both Costa's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds arrived in the region on time, but only a few reports were received. Encouraging was the report of two Pileated Woodpecker nests in Annadel S.P. and at L. Lagunitas, Marin Co., (CP, JM). A pair of Lewis' Woodpeckers was seen nesting in the same location at S. Lake Tahoe where a pair nested in 1975 . . . same pair (WS)? This species is an uncommon nester in the L. Tahoe region. A "Red-breasted" Sapsucker was late at Dog L., Tehama Co., Apr. 21 (SAL).

Recent studies by sociologists have indicated that most Americans rarely stay in one place more than five years; we have become a nation of transients. The following type of data then, if the trend continues, will become increasingly difficult to obtain. The table below lists the average and earliest arrival dates of 22 selected spring

migrants recorded by Gordon Bolander in his yard (he has a yard list of over 200 species) in Santa Rosa over the past 26 years. The table is arranged from the earliest to the latest migrants and is not in phylogenetic order.

26-year arrival dates at Santa Rosa

Species	Average Arrival	Earliest Arrival
Allen's Hummingbird	Feb. 22	Jan. 26
Rufous Hummingbird	Mar. 17	Feb. 21
Rough-winged Swallow	Mar. 18	Feb. 27
Cliff Swallow	Mar. 21	Mar. 1
Barn Swallow	Mar. 23	Mar. 8
Western Flycatcher	Mar. 31	Mar. 11
Northern Oriole	Apr. 3	Mar. 23
Wilson's Warbler	Apr. 4	Mar. 21
Warbling Vireo	Apr. 6	Mar. 11
Black-headed Grosbeak	Apr. 12	Mar. 31
Yellow Warbler	Apr. 16	Apr. 7
Solitary Vireo	Apr. 19	Mar. 30
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Apr. 19	Apr. 10
Western Kingbird	Apr. 23	Apr. 6
Black-throated		
Gray Warbler	Apr. 24	Apr. 7
Purple Martin	Apr. 25	Mar. 31
Swainson's Thrush	Apr. 29	Apr. 2
Western Tanager	Apr. 29	Apr. 19
Western Wood Pewee	May 1	Apr. 21
Olive-sided Flycatcher	May 1	Apr. 19
Yellow-breasted Chat	May 1	Apr. 16
Lazuli Bunting	May 1	Apr. 19

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS —

Western Kingbirds seem to arrive earlier in spring in the C.V. than they do along the coast making one wonder about the point origins of the two migrant populations. Late March records inland are normal; however on the coast those records for the first week in April are unusually early. The now-famous Olivaceous Flycatcher that wintered in the Carmel River Valley was still present into the second week in April (*vide* DE). A single Willow Flycatcher at Dog I., Tehama Co., Apr. 5 was somewhat early (SAL). Fewer Gray Flycatchers were reported this spring than last. Two were reported along the coast, the earliest noted Apr. 30 at Coyote Hills (SFB). In the C.V. one was at Willow Slough Apr. 24 and another at Davis May 5 (both DAG). An early Olive-sided Flycatcher was seen Apr. 4 at New Brighton Beach S.P., Santa Cruz (LCB). A regional high of some 442 Bank Swallows in five different colonies along a 12-mile stretch of the Sacramento R. between Red Bluff and Tehama May 16 was encouraging (SAL). The Army Corps of Engineers has a habit of turning Bank Swallows habitat into cement in California, making it hard for the little guys to find suitable nest sites.

CORVIDS THROUGH THRUSHES — Two ravens seen in Berkeley and Hayward Apr. 19–21 respectively (same pair?) were noteworthy as they are quite scarce in the East Bay (JR,DE). A single Chestnut-backed Chickadee was seen at the Calaveras Big Trees S.P. May 23 (DE). They are known to occur here and breeding

should be looked for. Six White-breasted Nuthatches were seen at May L., Yosemite N.P. at an elevation of 9500 ft. May 22 (TB). This is a high elevation for this species in spring, but they do drift up-slope in the late summer after breeding. Cañon Wrens were found nesting at Clear Lake S.P. May 2 (CP). There is limited habitat for California Thrashers in Marin County so the presence of a singing male on Carson Ridge May 27 is interesting (DS). The first San Mateo County Sage Thrasher was present at Pillar Pt. May 25 (PM,BS). Scarce all winter, Varied Thrushes were last reported in the San Antonio Valley Apr. 4 (AE). A peak movement of Swainson's Thrushes was observed at Palomarin May 11–19 when 23 were banded (P.R.B.O.). Western Bluebirds were found breeding at 6000 ft. at Cottonwood Campground s. of Sierraville May 29 (JH). This is a rather high altitude for this species in the n. Sierra. The coastward invasion of Townsend's Solitaires noted in the winter report produced a single bird on Mines Rd., Apr. 4 (AE).

GNATCATCHERS THROUGH WOOD WARBLERS — The invasion of Bohemian Waxwings cited in the winter report reached its southernmost penetration in the region in Tulare County. Between Apr. 2 and 17 at least ten birds were seen in two different flocks in Porterville (RAB) and a single bird was seen on lower Blue Ridge in Sequoia N. P. Apr. 25 (Mrs. W. Gray*). A Loggerhead Shrike on the lower Mad R., May 18–23 provided Humboldt County with its first May record for this species. A good description of what appeared to be the *plumbeus* race of the Solitary Vireo was seen in Tilden Park Apr. 24 (RD). A peak movement of Warbling Vireos was noted May 8–16 when 14 were banded at Palomarin, one of which, on May 16, was a returning bird that proved to be 11 years old (P.R.B.O.)! A compact little wave of Parulids was observed May 9 at Loma Prieta, Santa Cruz Co., that consisted of Townsend's, Orange-crowned, Black-throated Gray, Hermit, and Nashville Warblers in order of their abundance (TB, RM *et al.*). An ad. ♂ Black-and-white Warbler was seen on Pt. Reyes May 21 (BAS) while another female was banded at Palomarin May 27 (P.R.B.O.). Always rare in spring, two Tennessee Warblers were reported. A singing male at Fairhaven provided Humboldt County with its first spring record May 25 (BC) and an adult in good plumage was found on Pt. Reyes May 22 (JM). A lovely sight in the form of a singing ad. ♂ N. Parula Warbler was found on Pt. Reyes May 20 (BAS *et al.*). Another Hermit X Townsend's hybrid was seen in the Vaca Mts., May 9 (DAG). As if the finding of the wintering Cape May Warbler in Santa Cruz during the last period was not amazing enough, Winifred Greene tells us that *two* Cape Mays were in view at the same time Apr. 4 and at least one bird remained until Apr. 18. A Black-throated Gray Warbler seen Apr. 5 in Auburn was about 10 days early (BBa). Wilson's Warblers were noted as the "most numerous valley-foothill migrant" in the Porterville area this spring (RAB).

BLACKBIRDS THROUGH SPARROWS — A single Yellow-headed Blackbird found at L. Elizabeth near Fremont Apr. 24 was out of range (EM). Tri-colored Blackbirds breed along the coast in local areas. Two new breeding colonies were found in Sonoma County this spring. One in late April just e. of Sebastopol (JW) and another at the Sonoma County Airport Apr. 27 (CP).

Breeding Hooded Orioles in n. California are often associated with fan palms. This species appears to be expanding its range north along the coast. A singing male was seen in Napa May 9 and may have bred (BDP); although they have been recorded as far north as Del Norte County they are still rather rare north of the S.F. Bay Area. More appropriate for the spring report was the finding of a rather concentrated wave of 20 "Bullocks" Orioles Mar. 28 at Paicines (TB). A well-documented nearly ad. ♂ "Baltimore" Oriole was seen frequenting a feeder Apr. 1-18 in Yuba City (PH*,BED*,GM,RS). Two ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported along the coast. One was seen May 20 in Lafayette (LF) and the other was in San Pablo Apr. 7 (*fide* DR). An Apr. 11 Black-headed Grosbeak at Dog I., Tehama Co., was somewhat early (SAL). Six Lawrence's Goldfinches were found at Angwin and three were seen at Aetna Springs May 8 (JW). They are irregular in Napa County. Red Crossbills were found to be common this spring at S. Lake Tahoe where they have been noticeably scarce since 1969 (WS). Grasshopper Sparrows appeared in several coastal locations from Marin to Santa Cruz Counties and will probably breed. The breeding distribution of this species can vary from year to year. A Lark Sparrow at Tahoe Keyes Apr. 17 was most unusual at that elevation (WS). Scarce in Marin County, a singing Sage Sparrow was seen on Carson Ridge May 27 (DS). Two "Slate-colored" Juncos remained at a feeder until May 15 at Jacoby Creek, Humboldt County (*fide* TS). A singing ♂ Black-chinned Sparrow was found in a new location at Folsom L., El Dorado Co., Apr. 30 (WS). The Harris' Sparrow reported in the fall issue from Berkeley was last seen May 1 (*fide* DR). May records of White-throated Sparrows are scarce; a singing male seen in Berkeley (JR) and another at Santa Cruz (PM) both May 1 were

noteworthy. A Swamp Sparrow at Soquel Apr. 3 (PM, TB) may have been a wintering bird.

CORRIGENDA — In *Am. Birds* 30:119 Snow and Ross' Geese arrival dates from BED apply to Tule Lake not Gray Lodge. Also on the same page the Santa Cruz Fulvous Tree Duck was seen by EM only. On p. 124 the Indigo Bunting is the third Sonoma County record, not the first.

CONTRIBUTORS — Stephen F. Bailey, Bernice Barnes (BBA), Robert A. Barnes (RAB), Bird Bonanzas (B), Laurence C. Binford, Tony Bledsoe, Gordon L. Bolander, Bill Clow, Richard Dean, Bruce E. Deuel, Art Edwards, Dick Erickson, David A. Gaines, Joel Greenberg, Lynn Farrar, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Stan Harris, Craig Hohenberger, Joel Hornstein, Phoebe Hunter, Betty Kimball, Phyllis Laymon, Steve A. Laymon, Ron LeValley, John Luther, Susanne Luther, Eugene Makishima, Anne Manolis, Georgianne Manolis, Brian J. McCaffery (BJM), Peter Metropulos, Randall Morgan, Joe Morlan, Gary Page, Benjamin D. Parmeter, Carmen Patterson, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, William M. Pursell, Redwood Regional Ornithological Society, Jack Reinhold, Don Roberson (DR), Barbara Ruben, Dave Rudholm (DRu), Barry Sauppe (BS), Tom Schulenberg, Dave Shuford, Steven and Stephanie Singer, Bruce Sorrie (BSO), Rich Stallcup, Lynn Stenzel, Bob A. Stewart (BAS), Wally Sumner, Michael Taylor, Kris Tyner, John and Ricky Warriner (J&RW), Dave Winkler, Jon Winter (JW), Rich Worthington (RW), Bob Yutzy.—**RICH STALLCUP**, 4409 44th Avenue, Sacramento, CA. 95824 and **JON WINTER**, 1277 Yulupa Avenue #2, Santa Rosa, CA. 95405.