

MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

/Jon Winter and Tim Manolis

A wet windy spring saw the continuation of trends established during the drought-breaking winter period. Water was widespread and migrant waders and waterfowl in the Central Valley (hereafter, C.V.) were widely dispersed as a result (SAL,BED). Easterly winds "plagued" the migration watch at Pigeon Point in early spring, and kept many pelagic species offshore, which resulted in lower totals than last year for some species, e.g., (Black) Brant and Black-footed Albatross (BSa). In general, the numbers of most regular migrants off Pigeon Point, and the peak dates and numbers for many species (loons, scoters, Sooty Shearwater and Bonaparte's Gull) were similar to last year's results (AB 31:1044). Notable exceptions are discussed below.



Landbird migration was confusing owing to a complex series of weather patterns. Heavy, late rains seemed to retard migration for some species, but with clearing skies in April many observers reported that migrants were passing through on a normal timetable. The rush of water from the melting Sierra snowpack created high water conditions in many of the C.V. rivers, forcing typically secretive species out into the open (RH). The C.V. riparian habitat was less in use this spring and the foothill habitats saw a corresponding increase in bird numbers, indicating that riparian areas are much more important to migrants in drought years than they are in wet years (SAL). When normal migratory movements appear to be underway, cool weather and strong winds in late April and May seem to again retard migration. A dagger (†) indicates that documentation is on file with the editors.

LOONS. TUBENOSES — Unusual inland was a breeding-plumaged Arctic Loon on Rock Creek Res., near Belden, Plumas Co., May 7 (†TR). Less unusual were single Red-throated Loons on Lafayette Res., Contra Costa Co., Mar. 16, and L. Bon Tempe Apr. 1 (JM).

A Short-tailed Albatross was reportedly photographed in Monterey Bay Apr. 17 or 18 (*vide* DE). Hopefully, details will be forthcoming. Black-footed Albatrosses were reported in about average numbers but only a handful of N. Fulmars were seen, none after mid-March. Peak counts of Pink-footed Shearwaters were 20 at the Cordelle Banks May 7 (J&BDP), 25 on Monterey Bay Apr. 26 and May 14 (RS), and a high of 134 off Pigeon Pt., Apr. 30 (BSa,PM). Very rare in spring were at least two **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** at Cordelle Banks Mar. 17 (BSO,DS *et al.*). After an exceptional fall flight, Short-tailed Shearwaters lingered into spring with one or two at the Cordelle Banks Mar. 17 (DS,BSO *et al.*), ten there Apr. 7 (J&BDP), one in Monterey Bay Mar. 20 (DE,DRo) and 35 there Apr. 26 (RS). Incredible numbers of Manx Shearwaters were reported. At Pigeon Pt., 263 were tallied including 176 on Mar. 4 alone (BSa,PM)! Elsewhere, three flew N past Santa Cruz Apr. 10 (DP), one was at the Cordelle Banks Mar. 17 (BSO,DS *et al.*) and 2-3 were in Monterey Bay Mar. 20 (DE,DRo). Aside from a few reports of Ashy Storm-Petrels, as usual, the only other report was of a **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** on Monterey Bay May 1 (DRo: desc. to Calif. Rarities Comm.). It would represent the Region's first spring record.

PELICANS, HERONS — Exceptional numbers of Brown Pelicans wintering in the Region (m.ob.) were augmented by large numbers of birds returning from the s. earlier than usual in late March and early April. Representative reports were of 20 in Monterey Bay Mar. 20 (DE), up to 30 at the Salinas R. mouth Apr. 7 (DP) and 40+ at Alameda by May 18 (DE). A single Brown Pelican at College Cove, Humboldt Co., Apr. 4 (CH) was either exceptionally early or very late for that far n.

An ad. Little Blue Heron was at Palo Alto May 20 (AE). Of 16 Cattle Egret reports, six were coastal, nine were from interior valleys and one was in the Great Basin (see Table 1). A Snowy Egret at Hot Cr. Fish Hatchery, Mono Co., Apr. 14 (DAG) was unusual. A migrant Least Bittern in pickleweed at Moffett Field, Santa Clara Co., May 8 (WB) was slightly out of place: one near King's Landing May 19 was probably a migrant, but a calling bird in the Sutter Bypass the same day may have been breeding (DAG).

WATERFOWL — A (Black) Brant in the Napa Marshes, Napa Co., May 19 (KVV) was quite unusual, but one at Mono L., Apr. 21 – May 2 (TR,DW) and four at Mendota W.A. (RH *et al.*) were amazing. The Emperor Goose found at Moss Landing in the winter was seen occasionally until Apr. 22 (EM), on which date the three Emperor Geese at Limantour Estero were joined by a fourth bird (RS). None was reported thereafter.

Reports of 27 Blue-winged Teal, nine coastal and 18 inland, were about average. A hybrid Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal was at Pescadero Marsh Mar. 31 (†VR, Steve Cardiff). The only Eur. Wigeons reported were males at Moffett Field Apr. 13 (WB) and Golden Gate Pk., Apr. 1 (DE). Very late Ring-necked Ducks were two healthy females at Gray Lodge May 25 (BED) and a pair at L. Christopher May 27 (HLC). The ♂ Tufted Duck remained at Limantour until Apr. 17 (*vide*

P.R.B.O.). The few Barrow's Goldeneyes reported were at wintering locations, the last two at Bolinas Apr.

S.A.

The plight of Mono Lake has received prior attention in this journal (AB 28:945). This spring, yet another way in which this unique lake is important to birds was revealed when an extensive migration of waterbirds, virtually unknown previously, was documented on its shores (Table 1:DW). No less than 17 species were added to the lake's list of spring migrants, but the numbers recorded for some species indicated that they are no doubt of regular occurrence. The utility of Mono's waters for spring migrants is doomed, as are nearly all other aspects of the lake's biota, if the City of Los Angeles is allowed to continue diverting its tributaries at the present rate.

5 (RS). A ♂ Oldsquaw at Bodega Bay Mar. 19 (BBu) had wintered, but one at Martis Creek L., Placer Co., Apr. 23 (KK,GC) was very unusual. Male Harlequin Ducks were at Pacific Grove Mar. 13 & 20 (LCB,DE), Candlestick Pt., San Francisco until Apr. 23 (RS), and very late at the Sea Ranch, Sonoma Co., May 20 (J&BDP). A ♀ King Eider well described at Ano Nuevo Pt., May 6-7 (PM, †Linda Hale,BSa) was rumored present since February. A ♂ White-winged Scoter at Gallatin Beach, Eagle L., Mar. 12 (†DD) was far inland. A ♂ Red-breasted Merganser was on the Feather R., at Oroville mid-March – early April (BED,RS,JH).

RAPTORS, RAILS — A Goshawk near Lafayette Apr. 8 (†Harry Adamson) was quite unusual. Swainson's Hawks were scarce, with only 24 reported, all in the C.V., except for two in the Great Basin. Single Rough-legged Hawks on Pt. Reyes Apr. 22 (HLC), near Lincoln Apr. 23 (KK) and near Gray Lodge May 3 (KVV) were late lingerers. A dark-phase Ferruginous Hawk near Pigeon Pt., Mar. 11 and another dark bird near Moss Landing the next day (LCB,DE,BSa) were very unusual, and a light-phase bird at Lafayette Apr. 16 (LF) was late. Bald Eagles were nesting at a new site on L. Pillsbury, Lake Co., in March (*vide* OJK).

Two Black Rails at Tubbs I., May 19 (J&BDP) were at an expected location, but three calling birds at the Big Break near Oakley, Contra Costa Co., May 18 (DAG) constitute a previously unknown population.

SHOREBIRDS — Of 35 Snowy Plover nests at Pajaro Dunes, at least 14 failed owing to "weather, gulls or people" (J&RW). A nest found at Salmon Cr. Beach may be a first for Sonoma County (DS). A breeding-plumaged Am. Golden Plover at Wilder Beach, Santa Cruz Co., Apr. 24 (†DP) and 16 in a flock flying past Pigeon Pt., Apr. 23 (BSa) were unusual in spring.

A Marbled Godwit near Gridley Apr. 29 (SAL) was unusual, as were 80 late at Alameda May 25 (*vide* ER). Exceptional inland reports of Whimbrels were of 120 near Capay, Tehama Co., May 3 (*vide* SAL) and 73 there May 6 (SAL), 30 near Gridley Apr. 29 (SAL) and two at Bridgeport Apr. 22 (DW). Reports of 20 Lesser Yellowlegs from the C.V., and coast were about

Table 1. Waterbird Migration at Mono Lake, Spring 1978.

| Species | First count | Peak No.'s | Last count |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Eared Grebe | 87 (4/5) | 45,000 (4/23) | 3000 (5/31) |
| Western Grebe * | 24 (4/18) | 24 | 1 (5/31) |
| White Pelican | 125 (4/4) | 125 | 55 (5/4) |
| | | 100 (4/30) | |
| Cattle Egret * | 1 (5/4) | — | 1 (5/23) |
| Great Egret * | 1 (4/7) | — | — |
| Snowy Egret * | 2 (5/9) | 2 | 1 (5/23) |
| Green Heron * | 1 (4/5) | | |
| Black-bellied Plover | 100 (4/4) | 100 | 35 (5/12) |
| Semipalmated Plover | 2 (4/15) | 268 (5/2) | 2 (5/17) |
| Snowy Plover | 9 (4/5) | 214 (5/17) | 28 (5/31) [†] |
| Killdeer | 16 (4/4) | 45 (4/16) | 7 (5/31) [†] |
| Greater Yellowlegs * | 5 (4/4) | 23 (4/15) | 1 (5/2) |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | 1 (4/16) | 2 (4/30) | 2 (5/9) |
| Willet * | 2 (4/17) | 12 (4/23) | 1 (5/2) |
| Ruddy Turnstone * | 12 (5/12) | — | — |
| Red Knot * | 12 (4/19) | 15 (4/21) | 1 (5/12) |
| Least Sandpiper | 76 (4/4) | 2000 (4/30) | 20 (5/12) |
| Baird's Sandpiper * | 5 (4/17) | 5 | 1 (4/21) |
| Dunlin * | 1 (4/9) | 802 (5/2) | 10 (5/17) |
| Western Sandpiper | 4 (4/15) | 2025 (5/2) | 1 (5/29) |
| Sanderling * | 3 (4/21) | 21 | 21 (5/17) |
| Long-billed Curlew * | 1 (4/17) | 1 (4/29) | 1 (5/9) |
| Whimbrel * | 1 (5/12) | — | — |
| Marbled Godwit * | 1 (5/2) | — | — |
| Long-billed Dowitcher | 5 (4/5) | 44 (5/12) | 44 |
| Short-billed Dowitcher * | 38 (4/5) | 135 (4/25) | 26 (5/2) |
| Black-necked Stilt | 1 (4/17) | 6 (5/9) | 6 |
| American Avocet | 152 (4/5) | 300 (4/30) | + (5/31) [†] |
| Wilson's Phalarope | 4 (4/17) | 240 (4/30) | + (5/31) [†] |
| Northern Phalarope | 30 (5/1) | 1200 (5/17) | 4 (5/31) |

* First spring record(s) for Mono Lake.

[†] Remain to breed.

average. Single Solitary Sandpipers at Stemple Cr., Marin Co., Apr. 21 (†DS). Fresno Apr. 22 (*vide* RH). Sierra Valley, Plumas Co., Apr. 30 (PM) and the Arcata Bottoms May 2 (CH,DRu) were the only reports. Two pairs of Spotted Sandpipers at the Pajaro R., May 28 (DP) were suspected breeders. The last Wandering Tattler reported was also at an unusual location, the Alvarado Channel near Hayward May 30 (HLC). Inland Short-billed Dowitchers, apart from the amazing numbers at Mono L. (Table 1), included one at Auburn Apr. 14 (BBa,MA), two at Lake Forest, L. Tahoe Apr. 23 (KK), two at Martis Creek L., Apr. 30 (KK) and at least one at Honey L., May 3 (BED). A Red Knot was also at Lake Forest Apr. 23 (KK,GC).

GULLS, TERNS, ALCIDS — Herring Gulls are not common on the outer coast, so a total of 552 flying N past Pigeon Pt., including 225 Mar. 18 alone, were high numbers (PM). An ad. Mew Gull at Los Banos W.A., Mar. 10 (PM) was probably a first for Merced County. The Black-headed and Little Gulls at Humboldt Bay were observed into the first week of March (m.ob.). An ad. Franklin's Gull at Pigeon Pt., May 19 (PM, Bob Maurer) was a first San Mateo County record. After a

poor winter showing, Black-legged Kittiwakes were scarce. At Pigeon Pt., 579 were noted Mar. 4-5, but only 48 were seen thereafter (BSa,PM). Of 177 Sabine's Gulls flying by Pigeon Pt., 140 passed May 13 (BSa, PM). Elsewhere, concentrations of 50-75 at the Cordelle Banks May 7 (J&BDP,BBu), 35 in Monterey Bay May 9 (JM) and 25 there May 14 (RS) were reported.

Common Terns seemed slightly more common than usual with 200+ in Monterey Bay May 9 (JM) and 87 seen off Pigeon Pt.; including 46 on Apr. 30 (BSa,PM). Arctic Terns were more numerous than ever before in spring, with up to five in Monterey Bay Apr. 26 (RS) and May 9 (JM), seven on the Cordelle Banks Apr. 23 (†DS,J&BDP) and 30-40 there May 7 (J&BDP,BBu). At Pigeon Pt., a spring total of 364 was very high, and 213 there Apr. 30 must have been very impressive (BSa, PM). Least Terns returned to the usual spots in San Francisco Bay, but apparently began nesting only at the Alameda Naval Air Station, with 53 nests there by May 26 (DE). Thirteen at the Pajaro R., May 7 (DP,J&RW) was more than usual for a Monterey Bay locality in recent years, and a spring total of nine at Pigeon Pt., was high (BSa). One sitting on drifting debris 15 mi off Cape Mendocino May 27 (†Paul Springer *et al.*) was very strange. Two Royal Terns flying N at Pigeon Pt.,

Apr. 17 (†PM) provided the first spring record for a once-common, but now nearly-mythical species in the Region.

Common Murre migration numbers at Pigeon Pt., totalled 108,680, peaking at 34,372 Apr. 23 (BSa,PM). In 1977 only 14,424 were seen there all spring. Two Xantus' Murrelets were well seen on the Cordelle Banks Mar. 17 (†DS,BSo *et al.*). Ainley's contention (*West Birds* 7:59) that Ancient Murrelets depart "suddenly" in spring was supported by this year's sightings; e.g., 81 flew past Pigeon Pt., Mar. 18 (BSa), and only four others were reported thereafter.

PIGEONS THROUGH OWLS — Two Roadrunners heard singing May 26, 10 mi e. of Cottonwood, Shasta Co., were at the n. limit of their breeding range in the interior (SAL). Flammulated Owls were reported at two new locations within their known range. Two were heard at Black Lassen Pk., Humboldt Co., May 18 (CH,BC,DRu *et al.*), and three were heard along Buckeye Cr., near Claire at Eagle L. (G. Gould). One of the Snowy Owls that wintered at Manila remained until Mar. 16 (DRu). Twelve Spotted Owls were reported from Humboldt to Marin Cos., during the period (m.ob.). This species appears to be doing well in California in spite of the concern of some workers. The bird does appear to be declining in Oregon so continued monitoring of this owl is justified.

GOATSUCKERS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS — An impressive number of Black Swifts was reported from Ano Nuevo where 15 were observed May 29 (PM). The ♀ Blue-throated Hummingbird from Three Rivers, Tulare Co., reported in the winter season, apparently bred successfully. It was thought to have hybridized with an Anna's Hummingbird. Details of this nesting will be published elsewhere (*vide* John Lindsay). Ten Calliope Hummingbirds were feeding on Yerba Santa at Cohasset Ridge, Butte Co., Apr. 29 (SAL). Eight Pileated Woodpeckers were reported, all from coastal areas, two of which were found nesting at L. Bon-tempe, Marin Co., Apr. 1 (JM). An out-of-range Lewis' Woodpecker appeared at Pt. Reyes May 15 (WMP). The young Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S.v. varius*) reported from Tiburon in the winter season, remained until Mar. 11 (DS). Nine Williamson's Sapsuckers were reported from the Warner Mts., which is a substantial population for this species (SAL). A Hairy Woodpecker at Dog I., Tehama Co., Mar. 7 is noteworthy, since this species is quite rare on the floor of the C.V. (SAL). A Tropical Kingbird that wintered at L. Merced remained until Mar. 30 (PM), and another found Dec. 10 (not previously reported) at Foster City remained until Apr. 20 (BSa). This flycatcher rarely overwinters. An E. Kingbird at Pt. Reyes May 20 was the only one reported (EM). Migrant W. Kingbirds were reported as early as mid-March in Alameda, Madera, and Placer Cos., while 11 were tallied for the peak of migratory movement at Dog I., Apr. 22 (SAL). A well-described E. Phoebe was found at the Pt. Reyes Lighthouse Mar. 6 (†JE *et al.*). Spring records of this species are most unusual. Fourteen Gray Flycatchers were found throughout the Region and as expected all were from the interior except one found at Huddart Pk., San Mateo Co. May 12, which proved to be a first county

record (BSa). An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Hanford, Kings Co., Apr. 29 was exceptional as they are rarely found on the San Joaquin Valley floor (*vide* RH).

SWALLOWS THROUGH THRUSHES — A Bank Swallow was reported from Humboldt County Apr. 10 where there are few records, and 12 active nests were found at Ano Nuevo May 29 (PM). In spite of attempts by the grounds keepers to prevent their nesting, Cliff Swallows bred successfully on the campus of C.S.U., at Hayward this spring (HLC). The nests were hosed off the newly painted buildings by maintenance personnel, causing a campus controversy. But the swallows won out and scored at least a minor triumph for their kind. Ten Purple Martins were reported from the coast this spring which is a higher-than-normal number (m.ob.). Two Gray Jays were reported from the s. Warner Mts., May 29 (SAL). Although they are known to occur there they are rarely reported from this area. The Blue Jay that wintered at Fieldbrook, Humboldt Co., was last seen Mar. 9 and may have died (*vide* CH). The bird was acting strangely and was easily approached. A flock of ten ravens 8 mi s.w. of Red Bluff Mar. 15 is of interest as this corvid is quite rare in the n. Sierra (SAL). Most unusual was the discovery of nesting Red-breasted Nuthatches in Fresno May 11. It was the first breeding record for the San Joaquin Valley (KH,RH). The Courtland Bendire's Thrasher remained this year until Apr. 8 (A. Parker). A Mockingbird at Mono L., May 3 was in an unusual location (DW). Of the large wintering populations of Varied Thrushes a few individuals stayed well into May.

PHAINOPEPLA THROUGH WOOD WARBLERS — A pair of Phainopeplas w. of their normal range, was seen in Santa Rosa Apr. 22 (BDP). Northern Shrikes remained later than normal with two at Susanville Apr. 2 (EH). The most exciting find of the spring for landbirders was a **White-eyed Vireo** on Pt. Reyes May 18-21 (A.&W. Ghiorso, †FBe,WMP, m.ob.). This is the third state record for this rare vireo, all others of which have occurred in spring. Several observers reported Solitary Vireos as arriving in mid-March, which is earlier than normal. A single Red-eyed Vireo was seen in Golden Gate Pk., June 6 (LCB).

Three Black-and-white Warblers were reported; two coastal on Pt. Reyes and one inland at Honey Lake W.M.A., May 13 (SAL). Of the large number of Tennessee Warblers that wintered at least one remained to Apr. 5 at Stinson Beach (RS). Two other migrants were reported from Pt. Reyes May 20 (LCB), and at Palomar May 27 (BSo). Two N. Parulas were found on Pt. Reyes; a male and a female May 20-21 (LCB,JM,AF *et al.*). The Magnolia Warbler that wintered along the Pajaro R., Santa Cruz Co., was last seen Apr. 27 (EM). Peak migratory movement for "Audubon's" Warblers at Dog I., was 87 on Mar. 7 (SAL). An exceptionally rare bird in spring, a single ♂ Blackpoll Warbler, was seen near Benton Hot Springs May 29-31 (LJ). A rather late Palm Warbler wintered until Apr. 12 along the Pajaro R., Monterey Co. (DP). A Yellow-breasted Chat found at Honey Lake W.M.A., May 13 was the first recorded here (SAL). A breeding-plumaged ♂ Hooded Warbler was a rare find at Pt. Reyes May 20 (LCB *et al.*). Only one Am. Redstart was reported this spring;

from Honey Lake June 1 (TM *et al.*). The male that wintered on the Pajaro R., was last seen Mar. 26 (EM).

BLACKBIRDS THROUGH FINCHES — Eight Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Pigeon Pt., May 14 were of interest as they are rarely recorded in San Mateo County (BSa). A ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Pt. Reyes May 20 was the only one reported (EM). Two ♂ Blue Grosbeaks along the San Joaquin R., May 27 (AE) and three more seen at the Woodland Sugar Ponds in April and May (*fide* BK) were encouraging. This species is in real trouble in this Region, having shown a marked decline in the last 25 years. A singing ♂ Indigo Bunting returned to Olema Marsh May 15 for the second consecutive year (WMP *et al.*). Evening Grosbeaks were seen in lowland areas well into May following last winter's invasion. At least 15 Grasshopper Sparrows were reported from coastal areas from Sonoma to Monterey Cos., and all appeared to be singing on territory. The breeding status of this sparrow is poorly understood in the Region as it tends to shift breeding grounds from year to year. A rare migrant Vesper Sparrow was seen 10 mi s.w. of O'Neal's, Madera Co., May 21 (RH). Rufous-crowned Sparrow has proven to be a rather common breeding bird in the Sutter Buttes now that the area is more accessible to observers. Some 12 were seen in a single outing this spring (WA). A single Tree Sparrow at Pennington, Sutter Co., Mar. 4 was the only one reported this spring (JH). A Harris' Sparrow at Fair Oaks, Sacramento Co., that arrived Dec. 8 last year (previously unreported) remained until Apr. 28 (*fide* BK). One of the most remarkable finds of the season was an ad. ♂ **Snow Bunting** May 11 at Cape Mendocino (BC,CH *et al.*). This provided a first spring record for the Region.

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