

**MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION**  
**/Jon Winter and Tim Manolis**

The heavy winter and spring rains were a boon to nesting birds in the Region this summer. Nesting waterbirds were more widespread than they had been during the past two summers in the Central Valley (hereafter, C.V.: BED,RH), and the productivity of gallinaceous birds, particularly California and Mountain quails, was good-to-excellent in many areas (BBa,BGE). Birds started nesting early in the Sierras, despite a heavy snowpack that lingered into June above

6000 feet, and some species (e.g., American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco) had second broods developing at the end of the period (TM). Monterey Bay seemed to be “full of fish” and the kinds of birds (shearwaters, pelicans, cormorants and murre) that feed on them (J&RW). Cattle Egrets were finally found nesting in the Region, and reports of White-rumped Sandpiper and Black Skimmer stirred birding hotlines along the coast. Observers who spent time early in the period along the coast looking for vagrants noted that the numbers and diversity of these much sought after waifs were well below last spring’s landfall. But as usual a few surprises made “hunting” most enjoyable. A dagger means that documentation is on file with the editors.



**STORM-PETRELS, PELICANS** — Storm-Petrels have a way of showing up in strange places. A report of a Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel in Monterey Bay May 7 (RLeV) and one found dead at Moss Landing July 17 (R.L. Pitman) were not too unusual, but one found dead on Grove St., Berkeley June 27 (*fide* VR) certainly was! An Ashy Storm-Petrel seen 1.5 mi w. of the Berkeley Marina July 12 (VR *et al.*) was also a surprise, and one of but a handful of San Francisco Bay (hereafter, S.F. Bay) records.

Around S.F. Bay, large numbers of White Pelicans returned early (or never left?), with 200+ at Alvarado, Alameda Co., June 24 building up to 500 by July 29 (DE), up to 250 on salt ponds near Vallejo July 31 (FKB) and 400+ near Mountain View, Santa Clara Co., from July 7+ (TC). There were scattered reports elsewhere around the bay, and many of these sightings may be of the same birds. Was some large, interior colony abandoned early this year? Only 24 were noted at Honey L., July 12 (JM), but about half were juveniles

and nesting was suspected. Brown Pelicans remained common along the coast, and 4771 flew by the Pajaro R. mouth in one hour July 29 (J&RW).

**HERONS, IBISES** — One or two Little Blue Herons, reported present since spring, were seen at the Palo Alto Baylands in late July (JM,DE,PM). An ad. Cattle Egret was chasing insects through pickleweed at Moffett Field, Santa Clara Co., June 29 (WB) and 20 were on a ranch s. of the S. Wilbur Flood Area (hereafter, S.W.F.A.), Kings Co., July 7 - 10 (BED).

#### S.A.

Expected for some time, the nesting of Cattle Egrets in the Region was confirmed at *three* different locations this summer. A number of Cattle Egrets in a Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron colony at the Corcoran Irrigation Dist. Res., Kings Co., June 30 looked suspicious; on July 4, 15 - 20 active Cattle Egret nests were tallied (JLi). The birds were nesting in willows. In another Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron colony, this one in cattails on Mendota W.A., Fresno Co., 15 adults and three-five nestlings were seen July 2 (RH). Finally, three nesting pairs were found on a cypress grove island in a marsh near Eureka, Humboldt Co., Aug. 4 (SAK). Cattle Egrets probably bred at one or more of these sites in recent years but went undetected. Future nesting elsewhere in the Region seems likely.

A belated report of a Least Bittern calling near Grenada, Siskiyou Co., May 6 - 7 (MT) and two seen in the S.W.F.A., July 6 - 9 (BED) were of interest. Reports of White-faced Ibis included three at the McCloud Sewage Ponds, Siskiyou Co., May 18 (MT *et al.*), 15 at Honey L., June 3 (SAL) and one at the S.W.F.A., July 9 (BED).

**WATERFOWL** — While they are perhaps regular there, at least seven Fulvous Whistling Ducks in the Tulare L. Basin July 6 - 10 (BED) were the first reported in the Region since 1975. Sixty-five adults and 185 ducklings were amazing numbers of Gadwalls at the Salinas R. mouth June 16 (PM,DP). A "ratty" ♂ Ring-necked Duck at Alvarado July 20 (DE) probably summered. Possible breeding pairs of Ring-neckeds were on Baum L., Shasta Co. (DM,JM) and Manzanita L., Lassen N.P. (DM) during the summer. A ♀ Canvasback with young at the Woodland Sewage Ponds in July provided a first local breeding record for a rare breeding species in California (*fide* BK), and another Canvasback brood was seen in the Tulare L. Basin July 10 (BED). Three ♂ Buffleheads summered at coastal localities, and the species was more common than usual in its normal breeding range in n.e. California (BED). Two ♂ **Harlequin Ducks** Upper Twin L., Lassen N.P., July 19 (SAL) provided some grounds for hoping that this species may still nest in California. Surf and White-winged Scoters summered in good numbers along the coast (m.ob.), and reports of 13 Black Scoters during the period included 11 (6 males, 5 females) together near Thornton Beach.

**HAWKS, CRANES** — White-tailed Kites remained scarce in areas reporting reduced numbers during the preceding winter. A statewide survey seems in order. Only 8 - 9 Swainson's Hawk reports continued another discouraging recent trend. A Prairie Falcon nest in the e. S.F. Bay area failed, apparently because the nest was "robbed" (*fide* HLC).

On the bright side, young Sandhill Cranes at Lower Klamath N.W.R. (hereafter, L.K.N.W.R.) were the first signs of nesting success there in three years (*fide* MT).

**SHOREBIRDS** — A pair of Black Oystercatchers nesting at the Cliff House June 6 (LCB) may have been the first ever to breed in San Francisco. As noted in the spring report, Snowy Plovers fared poorly at Pajaro Dunes, and only ten fledged from 36 nests (J&RW). Two pairs were found nesting at L.K.N.W.R., July 30 (*fide* MT) and a nest with eggs was found at Pescadero Cr. mouth July 15 (*fide* TC).

The breeding of Spotted Sandpipers along the Pajaro R., near Watsonville was finally confirmed when three young were seen July 22 (PM). A Ruddy Turnstone in breeding plumage was seen at L.K.N.W.R., July 30 (*fide* MT). Two Wilson's Phalaropes at the Ukiah Sewage Ponds July 29 - 30 (OLK) were considered noteworthy for Mendocino County. A breeding-plumaged Red Phalarope at the Carmel R. mouth June 3 - 4 (m.ob.) was late. Single Com. Snipe at the S.W.F.A., July 7 (BED) and the Palo Alto Baylands July 31 (PM) were apparently very early migrants. A calling Short-billed Dowitcher was at the Hollister Sewage Ponds July 31 (DE).

#### S.A.

The birding event of the season involved a **White-rumped Sandpiper** found at the Carmel R. mouth June 2 (†JML) and observed by many until June 6. Additionally, what was described as a different individual (the observer had seen the Carmel bird) was found at Kehoe Beach, P.R.N.S., June 11 (†RLeV, T. Parmenter). There are only two previously published records for the state, both from the Salton Sea in June (AB 30:1003).

Three Dunlins, a species which rarely summers in the Region, were at Alvarado June 24 (DE).

**JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS** — The only jaegers reported were in Monterey Bay; an ad. Pomarine and an imm. Parasitic at the Salinas R. mouth June 16, and single imm. Parasitics at Pajaro Dunes June 3 and July 14 (PM,DP).

California Gulls hung on and nested successfully at Negit I., in Mono L., but their future there remains cloudy as the water level of the lake inexorably continues to drop. Rare in the summer, two ad. Franklin's Gulls were at Hartson Res., Honey Lake W.A., June 3 (SAL *et al.*) and a single adult was at the S.W.F.A., July 9 (BED). Flocks of non-breeding Bonaparte's Gulls may show up anywhere in the Region: witness 20 - 150 at L.K.N.W.R., June 20 - July 15 (*fide* MT); 40 at

Alvarado June 24 (DE); 80 at Pajaro Dunes June 11 (PM) and 30-40 at S.W.F.A., July 6-11 (BED).

A few Com. Terns apparently summered in Monterey Bay (PM). Very rare in summer were two ad. Arctic Terns 5 mi w. of Pt. Pinos June 4 (PM) and an adult and immature at the Pajaro R. mouth July 7 & 21 (PM, DP, J&RW). Eighty pairs of Least Terns nested at the Alameda Naval Air Station, making it the second largest colony in the state this year, and two pairs nested near Alvarado, apparently for the first time (DE). Reports of up to 14, including some immatures, at Palo Alto Baylands July 28-31 (JM, PM) and of 80 at the e. side of the Dumbarton Bridge July 30 (AE) may be of birds dispersing from those colonies or from some undetected colony in s. S.F. Bay. Only two reports of singles were received from Monterey Bay. Two Caspian Terns circling over flooded Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite N.P., June 21 (FBe) must have been a sight. A reported decline of nesting Black Terns in part of the n. C.V., bears watching in the future (SAL).

Reports of **Black Skimmer** were received from three locations, but all sightings may have been of the same bird. One was noted at Moss Landing June 21-28 (*fide* JM, †PM), one was seen along Charleston Slough, Palo Alto June 29 and July 9 (*fide* JM) and one was seen at Alvarado July 20 (†DE, VR). There are only two previous regional records, but given the recent arrival of this species as a breeding bird on the s. California coast, can nesting in n. California be far behind?



*Black Skimmer, Alvarado, Alameda County, Calif., July 20, 1978. Photo/ Van Remsen.*

Remains of single Horned Puffins, both dead for some time, were found at Kehoe Beach June 11 (RLeV) and the Salinas R. mouth July 8 (PM).

**PIGEONS THROUGH OWLS** — Six Yellow-billed Cuckoos were found July 20 near Woodson Bridge S.R.A., Tehama Co., with two recently fledged young (SAL). This species has suffered major declines in the Region in the past 30 years owing to habitat destruction and cowbird parasitism, so any reports of successful breeding are encouraging. Two young Flammulated Owls found June 2 by a woodcutter near Cecilville, Siskiyou Co., were hand-raised and released in late July (*fide* MT).

S.A.

A belated report of a Great Gray Owl that was picked up injured in May 1977, at Coon Hollow, on the Lassen N. F., is of considerable interest. Although the bird later died, this is the third known and reliable occurrence of this owl since 1937, in the Sierra, outside Yosemite N.P. There is little doubt that the Great Gray Owl is an endangered species in California. Its decline in the Sierra may be linked to the loss of old-growth forests to lumbering activities. However its ecological requirements are poorly known and research is needed to determine what factors must be considered to insure its continued existence in California. Hopefully, the U.S. Forest Service, which currently administers all of the known Great Gray Owl habitat outside of Yosemite, can be encouraged to underwrite a study to determine what status this owl now enjoys on National Forest land before it is too late.

The report of 50 Burrowing Owls enjoying a suitable bit of real estate around the Executive Airport in Sacramento this summer was good news (*fide* BK). These little owls are having more than their share of trouble staying ahead of the bulldozers and concrete in California. Short-eared Owls were found nesting again at Honey L., where five pair were found June 3-5 (SAL). The drought appears to have affected nesting the last two years.

**GOATSUCKERS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS** — Black Swifts nested in normal numbers at Ano Nuevo and Mossbrae Falls, but appeared well below expected numbers at Burney Fall S.P., where only three were found June 21 (DM). The ♀ Blue-throated Hummingbird reported from Three Rivers, Tulare Co., after having nested once this spring, apparently re-nested. The suspected mate was a ♂ Black-chinned Hummingbird, but the attempt failed when the fledglings died. The persistent Blue-throated Hummingbird departed for parts unknown on May 27 (*fide* DRo). Williamson's Sapsuckers apparently had a banner year in the Sierra where several observers reported them as "common" this summer. An E. Kingbird seen on Pt. Reyes June 18 was the only one reported for the period (*fide* DRo). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen and well described 12 mi n.e. of Clovis, Fresno Co., July 8 (KHt *et al.*). This is the first occurrence for this flycatcher in the San Joaquin Valley, and the eleventh record for the Region.

**SWALLOWS THROUGH THRUSHES** — Some 30 pairs of Purple Martins nesting along the Pit R., Shasta Co., this summer represented one of the largest breeding populations in the Region (PD). A Clark's Nutcracker, a very rare straggler on the coast, was seen June 13 at Tomales Bay S.P. (JE). An out-of-range Mountain Chickadee that probably came from the Cascade Range populations was seen June 2 on Pt. Reyes (VR *et al.*). Most interesting was the discovery of a dead Brown Thrasher June 29 on the beach at Pajaro Dunes (PM, \*Calif. Acad. Sci.). Mid-summer records for this species are exceptionally rare.

**GNATCATCHERS THROUGH WOOD WARBLERS** — Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers seen July 14 on Red Rock Rd., Lassen Co., appear to be continuing a recent colonization of the Great Basin (JM). A **Yellow-throated Vireo**, the Region's second mainland record, was seen by a number of observers on Pt. Reyes June 3 (B&HL, †JM, m.ob.). A singing Solitary Vireo seen at Woodson Bridge, Tehama Co., July 6 was probably an early fall migrant (SAL). Two Red-eyed Vireos were reported for the period; one at Golden Gate Pk. June 6 (LCB) and the other at Bodega Bay July 4 (BDP *et al.*). After having withstood the rigors of many migrations, dodged the talons of hungry predators, and helped raise countless young, a very old and very noble Warbling Vireo returned to P.R.B.O.-Palomarin for its thirteenth summer (*fide* RLeV).

Four Black-and-white Warblers were found coastally June 2 – July 9, fewer than could be expected. The Region's ninth **Worm-eating Warbler** was found at Jewel L., Tilden Park July 11 - 21 (P. Gordon, †DE, †JM, m.ob.). Only three Tennessee Warblers were reported; two at Pt. Reyes June 2 - 3 (KVV, VR, EM) and another, quite rare inland, was seen at Honey L., June 4 (SAL). A Magnolia Warbler on Pt. Reyes June 29 (WMP *et al.*) and another on the F.I., June 22 (P.R.B.O.) were both on rather late dates for this species. Single Cape May Warblers were seen June 1 at Pt. Reyes (JM) and on the F.I., June 17 (P.R.B.O.). Nearly all of the Region's spring records for Black-throated Green Warblers are from the F.I. Another was seen there June 3 - 7 (P.R.B.O.). A Hermit Warbler seen at P.R.B.O.-Palomarin July 23 was probably an early migrant (P.R.B.O.). The Region's second summer record for the **Yellow-throated Warbler** was found on the F.I., June 4. It proved to be the white-lored (*D.d. albilora*) race, as expected. A single Chestnut-sided Warbler at the Watsonville Sewage Plant June 14 was the only one reported (EM). Five Bay-breasted Warblers found there way into the Region; four were on Pt. Reyes and the F.I., June 1 - 2 (m.ob.) and another was found inland at Grenada, Siskiyou Co., (*fide* MT) where they are exceptionally rare.

A single Blackpoll Warbler on the F.I., June 18 - 20 was the only one found this summer (P.R.B.O.). Unlike fall, Palm Warblers are very rarely reported in spring. Two birds turned up on the F.I., June 2 & 22 which is where nearly all of the Region's spring birds have been found (P.R.B.O.). At least five Ovenbirds were found coastally from Bodega Bay to Pt. Reyes (two on the F.I.) May 31 – June 8 (m.ob.). Complementing this spring's mainland record, a Hooded Warbler was seen on the F.I., June 3 - 11 (P.R.B.O.). Six Am. Redstarts were found; four along the coast June 2 - 24 Pt. Reyes to L. Merced and two were inland at Todd I., Tehama Co., July 20 (SAL) and at Honey L., June 1 (SAL). This is about the number of redstarts we can expect in spring; last spring's showing was exceptionally high.

**BLACKBIRDS THROUGH FINCHES** — Always rare in spring, a Bobolink was found on the F.I., June 3 - 6 (P.R.B.O.). Most of the Region's spring records for "Baltimore" Orioles have been found on the F.I.,

but a female was seen at Pt. Reyes June 1 (WMP, JM *et al.*). The Region's first **Great-tailed Grackle** was found feeding on the lawns of the Palace of Fine Arts in S.F., June 18 (†JH, m.ob.) and remained there, to the delight of the Region's army of "listers," until July 4 (PM). The bird was carefully identified, ruling out the possibility of the similar but unlikely Boat-tailed Grackle. Two Summer Tanagers were reported; one on the F.I., June 12 and the other on Pt. Reyes June 3 - 4 (JM *et al.*).

Only four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen this summer; all were from the coast June 3 – July 1; this is fewer than normal. Five Blue Grosbeaks were reported from inland locations and were probably breeding. A very late ♀ Evening Grosbeak was seen in Golden Gate Pk., June 8: the first recorded there (PM). An unusually late Vesper Sparrow remained on the F.I., June 23 - 24 (P.R.B.O.). A Clay-colored Sparrow found its way to the F.I., June 1 - 3 (P.R.B.O.). This bird is very rare in spring and all the records have been from the F.I. A very late Fox Sparrow was seen in Hayward June 8 (HLC). The bird was not one of the wintering races, having a distinctly gray head.

**CORRIGENDUM** — The reference to Swamp Sparrows in AB 32:397 should refer to Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Delete the editor's remarks that follow this reference.

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